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SHIHAB AL-DIN AL-NUWAYRI

The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition
A Compendium of Knowledge from the Classical Islamic World

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Acclaim for *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*

“A fascinating peek at the minds of our ancestors. You can see how man’s understanding of the world has changed drastically in some ways and remained startlingly constant in others. Plus the book is just plain fun to read.”

—A. J. Jacobs, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Know-It-All* and *The Year of Living Biblically*

“A smart, exhilarating selection from a vast work. The scholarship is solid but unobtrusive, and the style, clear and flavorful, draws the reader in. Al-Nuwayrī’s encyclopedia, somewhat like Vincent of Beauvais’s a hundred years before him, delights as it moves between learned tradition, jaw-dropping anecdote, and elegant (and elegantly translated) poetry. Dip in, and a distant world, endlessly colorful, comes to sparkling life.”

—Andras P. Hamori, Princeton University

“From the structure of the heavens to the curious anatomy of the hippopotamus, with stops to view everything from book-keeping to aphrodisiacs, this charming fourteenth-century encyclopedia gives a glimpse of the entire world as seen by a very learned Egyptian summing up the powerful tradition of medieval Islamic scholarship known in his time. Elias Muhanna’s very readable translation allows the reader to gain a rounded experience of a deeply interesting bygone world.”

—Roy P. Mottahedeh, Harvard University

“Finally, thanks to Elias Muhanna’s expert translation, editing, and explanatory notes, we have access to a real encyclopedia to place alongside Borges’s mythical Chinese text. An extraordinary work, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition* strives for nothing less than an orderly, total account of the world, and Al-Nuwayrī’s unique accomplishment in the encyclopedic tradition is not to suggest that wonder is to be found in the many oddities, rarities, and exceptions of the given world, but to show how, beneath these features, there is a deeper and more marvelous order.”

—Elliott Colla, Georgetown University

“This engaging volume lets you dip into the world of a fourteenth-century Egyptian encyclopedist who knew about the endless rain in

England, the skillfulness of artists in China, how a woman can get away with claiming to be a prophetess, why a bureaucrat should never commit the size of the army to writing, and anything else worth knowing.”

—Michael Cook, Princeton University

“This delightful volume offers readers of English the first opportunity to sample the vast and varied literature of Arabic encyclopedism. Under Elias Muhanna’s expert guidance you will encounter advice and information strangely foreign and occasionally familiar, drawn from al-Nuwayrī’s fourteenth-century perspective on history and politics, medicine and the natural world.”

—Ann Blair, Harvard University

THE ULTIMATE AMBITION IN THE ARTS OF ERUDITION

SHIHĀB AL-DĪN AHMAD ibn ‘Abd AL-WAHHĀB AL-NUWAYRĪ (1279–1333) was an Egyptian scholar and civil servant in the Mamluk Empire. During his career, he served in various government posts in Egypt and Syria, overseeing colleges and hospitals in Cairo, the imperial chancery in Tripoli, and properties belonging to Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad, who was for a time al-Nuwayrī’s patron. Upon retiring from government service in the 1310s, al-Nuwayrī devoted the remainder of his life to the composition of *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*, a nine-thousand-page, thirty-three-volume encyclopedia. One of the most important collections of medieval Arabic literature and Islamic thought, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition* attracted the attention of European scholars beginning in the seventeenth century and was read and studied in the Islamic world until the modern period.

ELIAS MUHANNA is the Manning Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Brown University. He is a scholar of classical Arabic literature and Islamic intellectual history. Born in Lebanon, he now lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

SHIHĀB AL-DĪN
AL-NUWAYRĪ

The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition

A COMPENDIUM OF KNOWLEDGE FROM
THE CLASSICAL ISLAMIC WORLD

*Edited, Translated, and with an Introduction
and Notes by ELIAS MUHAMMA*

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Introduction

Sometime around the year 1314, a government bureaucrat living in Cairo, Egypt, grew tired of his daily duties in the Mamluk Empire's financial administration and decided to devote the rest of his life to the composition of a massive compendium of knowledge. By the time of his death in 1333, Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī had assembled one of the most important collections of Arabic-Islamic literature and thought, which he titled *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*. It distilled several centuries of poetic, narrative, historical, religious, and scientific writings into an enormous summa that was faithfully copied and studied until the early twentieth century.

The encyclopedic gathering of many disciplines and discourses within a single book was not al-Nuwayrī's innovation. His work is an exemplar of the classical Islamic humanistic tradition that had formed the basis of learned culture in the Near East for centuries. Al-Nuwayrī's text, however, represents one of the tallest peaks in that sprawling mountain range of literary anthologies, cosmographical compendia, dictionaries, and miscellanies. Composed during a period of political stability and economic prosperity, it benefited from the circulation of books, scholars, scientists, and litterateurs between the colleges and libraries of Cairo, the cultural and intellectual center of the Islamic world.

I first encountered *The Ultimate Ambition* as a graduate student, while preparing for my comprehensive exams in classical Arabic literature. On the list of texts for which I was responsible was an excerpt, of unspecified length, from al-Nuwayrī's encyclopedia. I recall following my adviser into the stacks of the university library on a fall afternoon and standing together before an imposing row of large, identically bound volumes. The professor pulled one out, flipped to a page, and said nonchalantly, "How about a hundred pages from this chapter?"

The chapter in question was about legal contracts, rental agreements, and property rights. Composed of bureaucratic terminology I could barely negotiate and accounts of bizarre commercial transactions, I labored for days to make sense of it. But I was hooked. Here was the boilerplate legal language for a marriage contract between two deaf-mutes. Elsewhere, a discussion of a buyer's

right to return a slave girl if he discovered she had an invisible “blemish” after the sale. Encountering such unvarnished accounts of daily life in a medieval society felt thrilling to me, and I had a sense that I would find my way back to this work before long.

As I discovered once I read beyond the discussion of legal contracts, al-Nuwayrī’s *Ultimate Ambition* is a thirty-three-volume collection of poetry, literary epistles, historical narratives, taxonomies, pharmacopoeial antidotes, ancient fables, and much more. Like many other premodern encyclopedias such as Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* and Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*, *The Ultimate Ambition* is a storehouse of cultural knowledge, a kind of textual museum. A reader perusing its pages might happen upon the recipe for a breath-freshening tonic; or some advice on how to escape from an angry rhinoceros; or a chapter devoted to the medicinal properties of spikenard, porcupine flesh, or marigold blossoms. Replete with Borgesian hierarchies and classificatory schemes, the work presents a window on the social, intellectual, political, and economic landscapes of a premodern Islamic society.

Or, if not quite a window, perhaps a looking glass. Al-Nuwayrī assembled his book from a large library of sources, drawing on materials that originated in different literary traditions and historical epochs, from Ancient Greece, Persia, and India to the great archive of classical Arabic-Islamic thought. The world that appears in *The Ultimate Ambition*’s pages is not a plain reflection of al-Nuwayrī’s quotidian reality but rather a medieval imaginary of warped dimensions, a dreamworld inhabited by real and fantastical creatures, living and long-dead monarchs, the sights and sounds of fourteenth-century Cairo alongside scenes from once-glorious Baghdad during its golden age.

Strangely, the work holds together in spite of its thematic heterogeneity. The synthesis al-Nuwayrī strives for is not so troubled by contradiction or ambiguity. A chapter on the religious prohibition of sodomy and the punishment of the homosexual is followed by a much longer chapter of poetry celebrating the charms of the male beloved. A list of authoritative reports on the prohibition of singing is followed by a catalog of equally authoritative reports on the virtues of song, which introduces a two-hundred-page stretch of biographies of famous singers in Islamic history. Unfettered by the doctrinal shackles that moderns tend to associate with the medieval era, the world that *The Ultimate Ambition* presents is full of paradox and pleasure—which is to say, alive.

The contradictions of al-Nuwayrī’s work and the multitudes it contains are part of the reason I felt drawn to translate it. My hope is that this abridgment will afford contemporary readers a view into the

kaleidoscopic and multifarious intellectual traditions of the classical Islamic world. This being an encyclopedia, there is no reason that one should read it from beginning to end; al-Nuwayrī's medieval readers certainly would not have done so. They likely engaged with his book in a consultative fashion, looking up a poetic verse or a rhetorical formula when the occasion called for it. I would imagine that his modern readers should do the same, guided by their interests and curiosity.

AL-NUWAYRĪ'S LIFE AND TIMES

In 1250 the Ayyūbid Dynasty founded by Saladin, which had ruled over Egypt and Syria for three-quarters of a century, was overthrown by a regiment of its own elite soldiers during the Seventh Crusade's invasion of Egypt. The regiment was known as the Bahriyya and comprised slaves (*mamālīk*, sing. *mamlūk*) imported from the Eurasian steppe. During this period, the slaves brought to Egypt were mainly Qipchaks, a Turkic nomadic people who lived across a vast territory stretching from the northern shores of the Black Sea to Lake Balkhash in eastern Kazakhstan. After being sold and brought south, they were trained in the military arts, educated in the principles of Islam, and freed, whereupon they served as soldiers and officers.

Military slavery was a well-established institution in the medieval Near East. Many rulers depended upon the conscription of slaves to form the backbones of their armies. However, the emergence of a polity ruled and sustained entirely by former slaves had no meaningful precedents. The typical path of a member of the Mamluk military caste began with his purchase at a young age in a slave market somewhere beyond the northern borders of the empire. Merchants brought the slaves to Egypt and Syria by sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, or by land through eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq. The young mamluk was then purchased by a powerful military officer (*amir*) or by the sultan himself and entered the aforementioned process of education and training that led to manumission, military service, and occasionally also wealth and political power.

The Mamluk political system was something of a military oligarchy, in which one of several senior amirs was elevated by his peers to serve as sultan, relying upon their support for the stability of his reign. Heredity carried no claim of legitimacy to rule. In cases where a sultan's son assumed the throne, the support of the oligarchy could not be circumvented; nonetheless, certain periods witnessed a *de facto* dynasticism setting in. The leading amirs cultivated their own power

by building up their “households” of recruited mamluks. The relationships between a patron and his emancipated slaves created intense and lifelong bonds of loyalty and self-sacrifice, and this social structure contributed both to the military prowess of the Mamluk army and the factionalism of the empire’s politics. The ruling caste set itself apart from the population it ruled through various markers of status: its members had Turkish names, spoke mostly in Qipchak Turkish with one another rather than Arabic, married slave girls from their former lands, rode horses, and had the right to purchase their own mamluks. Their children, however, were born free and given Muslim names, which often impeded their access to the political elite.

Contemporary chroniclers referred to the Mamluk sultanate as the Turkish State (*dawlat al-Turk*). It ruled over Egypt, Syria, and parts of Nubia, the Arabian Peninsula, and Mesopotamia for over two and a half centuries until it was overthrown by the Ottoman Empire in 1517. Within the first few decades of coming to power, the Mamluks had repelled a series of Mongol and Frankish invasions and brought an end to the remaining Crusader strongholds in the Levant. The pivotal battle in 1260 at ‘Ayn Jālūt halted the westward expansion of the Mongol conquests launched by Genghis Khan at the beginning of the thirteenth century and greatly enhanced the prestige and legitimacy of the Mamluks in the eyes of their subjects.

Al-Nuwayrī was born on April 5, 1279, in the Egyptian town of Akhmīm. His father appears to have been a scholar, and a few of his relatives had held bureaucratic positions in the Mamluk administration, which suggests that the family belonged to the learned civilian elite. Al-Nuwayrī spent much of his childhood in Qūs, a scholarly city in Upper Egypt where he studied with various teachers including Ibn Daqiq al-Īd, a future chief judge. It might have been this individual who facilitated the young man’s first job in the Mamluk government, as it was common for the relatives, students, and close friends of high-ranking officials to ride their coattails into the imperial administration.

In 1302, at the age of twenty-three, al-Nuwayrī left Egypt to assume a position in Damascus, managing the properties of Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad. He spent two and a half years living in and traveling around Syria, which was at that time a frontier territory with clashes between the Mamluks and the Mongols. Al-Nuwayrī was himself a participant in the battle of Marj al-Suffar in April 1303, where the Mamluks defeated the army of the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan and put an end to the Mongol invasions of Syria. Our author describes the battle in some detail (see p. 267), just as he documents other highlights of his time in Syria, a period during which he developed many friendships with Mamluk military commanders.

Al-Nuwayrī returned to Cairo in 1304, where he was made responsible for overseeing Sultan al-Nāṣir's properties in addition to several of the institutions endowed by al-Nāṣir's father, the late sultan Qalāwūn. This important position involved a combination of financial accounting, intelligence gathering, legal arbitration, property surveying, diplomacy and negotiation, and what we call today general management. As a high-ranking clerk, al-Nuwayrī sat at the center of a vast network of officials, merchants, and private individuals connected to the affairs of al-Nāṣir's government: jurists, teachers, Quran reciters, and students in the large collegiate mosques; surgeons, bone-setters, oculists, and their patients in the various hospitals around Cairo; sugar producers, traders, and agriculturalists; Mamluk officers and their retainers; judges, provincial governors, Sufi shaykhs, and more. Managing these interests effectively on behalf of the sultan's fisc required fluency in a range of discourses; this attitude comes across strongly in *The Ultimate Ambition's* chapter on scribal practice. Such adeptness would not have been essential for every clerk, but the culture of the elite might accurately be characterized as cosmopolitan and intellectually omnivorous in its outlook.

In September 1309 al-Nuwayrī left Cairo to join al-Nāṣir in the Syrian fortress of al-Karak during his second brief interregnum. When the sultan returned to Egypt at the end of February 1310 to begin his third and final reign, al-Nuwayrī was poised to benefit handsomely from his loyalty to the sovereign. However, he soon fell out of favor because of a political dustup involving the steward of the sultan, a crafty figure named Ibn 'Uḇāda. Al-Nuwayrī does not refer to this incident in his encyclopedia, but it was presumably a well-publicized scandal because several of his biographers allude to it.

By the end of the year, al-Nuwayrī had been dispatched to the town of Tripoli in present-day Lebanon, where he served as the superintendent of army finances and was head of the chancery, before returning to Egypt a final time in November 1312 to oversee the financial revenues of two provinces in the Nile delta. We do not know how long al-Nuwayrī held these positions or when he retired from administration, but it might have been around 1316. For the remainder of his life, he devoted himself to his encyclopedia, keeping body and soul together by working as a copyist of manuscripts. He died in Cairo on June 5, 1333.

The long reign of al-Nāṣir Muhammad (1293–94, 1299–1309, 1310–41) represented one of the most stable and prosperous periods in Mamluk history. Al-Nāṣir was successful at consolidating the power of the sultanate at the expense of the senior amirs—a challenge that had eluded many of his predecessors—while centralizing the state's administrative system and embarking on a major building spree.

Between 1298 and 1341, more than five hundred structures were built or renovated across the empire, including some of the most important monuments of Mamluk Cairo. Many of these structures were educational institutions—colleges, Sufi lodges, *ḥadīth* instruction schools—among the most visible of which was the college bearing the sultan’s name, the Nāsiriyya, where al-Nuwayrī himself lived.

The construction of educational institutions during this period had a pronounced impact upon the social context of scholarship. In many cases substantial budgets were allocated for the upkeep of educational facilities, residences for students and instructors, and full-time staff members such as gardeners, manuscript copyists, and librarians. Colleges like the Nāsiriyya were producers and consumers of a range and quantity of books unsurpassed in medieval Islamic history. They generated copious numbers of textbooks for advanced study in Quranic exegesis, jurisprudence, Arabic lexicography and grammar, poetry, logic, mathematics, and many other disciplines.

This rise in book production was particularly evident in the area of large compendia, such as lexicons, historical chronicles, legal manuals, biographical dictionaries, and literary anthologies. The proliferation of such works has earned the Mamluk period the epithet “the Age of Encyclopedias,” of which the present text was one of the earliest and most important examples.

THE ULTIMATE AMBITION IN THE ARTS OF ERUDITION

Containing over two million words and spanning thirty-three volumes, al-Nuwayrī’s encyclopedia is a work of enormous scope, arranged into five principal divisions: (i) the cosmos, comprising the earth, the heavens, the stars, and meteorological phenomena; (ii) the human being, containing material on hundreds of subjects including physiology, genealogy, poetry, women, music, wine, amusements and pastimes, political rule, and chancery affairs; (iii) the animal world; (iv) the plant world; and (v) a universal history, beginning with Adam and Eve and continuing all the way through the events of al-Nuwayrī’s lifetime.

The Arabic title of the work (*Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*) tells us that its subject is the cultivation of *adab*, a multifaceted concept which, in its classical formulation, denoted a standard of polite behavior and corpus of literary materials that formed the basis for a well-rounded education. By al-Nuwayrī’s time, the range of topics that fell under the purview of *adab* had grown. What we would call literature today was still the heart of this corpus: poetry, proverbs and parables, exemplary orations and epistles, and other examples of

belletristic prose. But it now also included medical remedies and other forms of practical science, technical discussions of financial accounting and legal practice, theological debates, enormous quantities of history, and other fields. While *adab* had always had an encyclopedic aspect, al-Nuwayrī's text represents a maximally expansive and disciplinarily agnostic vision of this ideal of humanistic education.*

Al-Nuwayrī composed his work as a kind of personal project of self-edification. As he states in his preface, he began compiling the book after retiring from public administration and devotedly studying *adab*, which he saw as the mark of the most enlightened minds of his time. He brought to this task the punctiliousness and taxonomic spirit of the government clerk, as evidenced by the arrangement of *The Ultimate Ambition*, which is relentlessly hierarchical. Its contents are laid out in a stratified fashion whereby certain subjects are subordinated to others (see the appendix). The horse, for example, is presented in the first chapter of the third section on livestock, which falls in book 3: *On the Mute Beasts*. The subchapter on the bitter orange falls in the first chapter on fruits with an inedible peel, part of the second section on trees, in book 4: *On Plants*. Within this maze of chapter headings there is a compiler at work, seeking to domesticate the heterogeneity of his material through his zeal for classification.

The size of *The Ultimate Ambition*, however, indicates that it could hardly have served the same function as many earlier *adab* compilations—as a practical textbook, for example, or a compact anthology of entertaining material. Much more likely is that it was meant to be read consultatively, in the manner of a dictionary or Quran commentary, or that it was designed to be amenable to partial copying, whereby a reader could easily find material he was interested in contained within a single volume, and then simply copy that volume. The typical chapter brings together a variety of materials, including verses from the Quran, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, philological glosses, historical anecdotes, and any poetry that al-Nuwayrī was able to find on the subject. The chapters vary greatly in length, ranging from a few hundred words to several volumes long. Book 5, which deals with the subject of history, is itself over twice as long as the first four books combined, and yet al-Nuwayrī insists that his work remained a compendium of *adab*, not a historical chronicle.

Like most medieval encyclopedic texts, *The Ultimate Ambition* was deeply indebted to earlier authoritative material. Much of the work is copied from hundreds of earlier sources, which al-Nuwayrī cites somewhat unevenly. On the whole he is an ecumenical compiler, unlikely to contest the opinion of one of his sources except on a rare occasion, and inclined to record many viewpoints on a given subject

rather than a single one. Despite the thematic diversity of his material, al-Nuwayrī seems to have a strong sense of his work's external borders and internal divisions, as evidenced by his propensity for directing the reader to other parts of the encyclopedia. In his chapter on the elephant in book 3, for example, after discussing the animal's genetic lineage, mating habits, and the length of its tusks, al-Nuwayrī briefly mentions the use of elephants in military conquests, referring his reader to a discussion of this practice in his subchapter on the Ghaznavid State in book 5. Such cross-references knit the work together and set it apart from other more digressive texts in the *adab* tradition.

RECEPTION

By virtue of its sheer size and multifaceted character, al-Nuwayrī's compendium has been exploited by readers in different ways over the course of its history. The manuscript record shows that it was copied for several centuries after al-Nuwayrī's death; later encyclopedists such as al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418) quoted liberally from it, and the great historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) used it as a source for his own history. In the West, *The Ultimate Ambition* became known as early as the seventeenth century, when several manuscripts were deposited at Leiden University. It appears that the text attracted the interest of European orientalist in the eighteenth century mainly for its accounts of pre-Islamic history. The first complete edition of the text was begun in Egypt in the early twentieth century by Ahmad Zakī Pāsha and completed in the 1960s, but its final volumes were published only in 1997. In more recent times *The Ultimate Ambition* has been drawn upon mainly by historians of the Mamluk Empire because of al-Nuwayrī's extensive treatment of the events of his own lifetime.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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A Note on the Translation

The tenth-century Cordoban litterateur ibn ‘Abd Rabbih once remarked that it was more difficult to anthologize literature than to write it. Our author, al-Nuwayrī, would have agreed. Encyclopedists have struggled with the problem of selection for as long as there have been encyclopedias. Al-Nuwayrī frequently apologizes to his reader for cutting short his treatment of a subject for fear of prolixity or repetition. Despite these measures to curtail textual sprawl, his work still manages to occupy thirty-three volumes in its modern edition.

Condensing *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition* into a one-volume translation has required yet more drastic strategies of containment. In selecting topics for inclusion, my principal concern has been to give the reader a sense of the encyclopedic character of this text by providing a wide and eclectic sample of the work’s contents. In practice, this approach has amounted to selecting short excerpts from a large number of chapters rather than long excerpts from fewer chapters. For purposes of readability I have rarely indicated omissions within the text. Had I done so systematically, each page of this book would be littered with ellipses and brackets. This is the case both for short snippets of text (such as the honorifics that often follow the names of esteemed individuals, which I have typically dropped or shortened) as well as much longer passages. I invite the reader to treat this abridgment as a kind of anthology of al-Nuwayrī’s work, rather than a scholarly translation that indicates every moment of departure from the original. Readers interested in the source text will find a list of page references to the selected passages at the end of the book (see p. 303).

In book 5, *On History*, I have confined my selections to al-Nuwayrī’s discussion of the story of Adam and Eve, the history of the Mamluk sultanate, and the events of his own lifetime. This was a decision born of necessity: the historical portion of *The Ultimate Ambition* accounts for over two-thirds of the entire work, occupying twenty-one printed volumes. Abridging its entire contents within the space allotted would have resulted in a cursory treatment of such enormous and complex topics as the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the first six centuries of Islamic history, to say nothing of al-Nuwayrī’s discussion of other periods of world history. Rather than attempt to condense such a vast quantity of text in a meaningful way, I have left it aside and focused

my attention on the very beginning and the very end of history, with emphasis upon the events to which al-Nuwayrī was a personal witness. The reader may gain a sense of the rest of the historical materials contained within *The Ultimate Ambition* by perusing al-Nuwayrī's own table of contents, which may be found in the appendix.

Place names are given in their Arabic form except in cases of major cities and regions (e.g., Egypt, Syria, Cairo, Damascus). Similarly, names of historical and religious figures well known to Western readers—such as Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Alexander the Great, and Avicenna—appear in their Latinized equivalents, while others (e.g., Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn ‘Abbās) retain their Arabic form. Note that the word “ibn” that appears in many Arabic personal names means “son of” (e.g. Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, or Ahmad, son of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb). Dates are given as they appear, following the Islamic calendar, with Common Era equivalents in parentheses.

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Chronology

April 5, 1279 al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī is born in Akhmīm, Upper Egypt.

1279–93 Son of Sultan al-Mansūr Qalāwūn and his son al-Ashraf Kh‘Alil.

1293 Beginning of the first reign of Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad (1293–94).

1279–93 Nuwayrī spends his early life in Egypt and completes his studies in the scholarly town of Qūs.

1299 Beginning of the second reign of Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad (1299–1309).

December 1299 Nuwayrī defeats the Mamluks at the battle of Homs and occupies Syria for a few months before withdrawing eastward.

1298–1302 is a likely resident in Cairo, though no professional appointments are noted by his biographers.

1302 Mamluk conquest of Rhodes; end of the Frankish threat to Syria.

1302–4 Nuwayrī serves in Syria with the Bureau of the Privy Purse (*dīwān al-khāss*), as a manager of the private properties of Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad.

April 20, 1303 Battle of Marj al-Suffar between the Mamluk and Mongol armies. The Mamluk victory puts an end to the Mongol attempts to take over Syria.

August 8, 1303 A storm off the coast of Crete strikes the coastline of the Mamluk realms in Egypt and Syria.

1304–9 Nuwayrī returns to Cairo and takes up residence at the Nāsiriyya college. He serves as the administrator of the al-Mansūrī hospital and other properties.

1305 Beginning of Ibn Taymiyya’s trials in Egypt (during which al-Nuwayrī serves as an intermediary).

1309 Nuwayrī accompanies Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad to the fortress of al-Karak in Syria, during his brief interregnum.

1310 Beginning of the long third reign of Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad (1310–41).

1310 Nuwayrī returns with al-Nāsir triumphantly to Cairo but soon falls out of favor because of political maneuverings within al-Nāsir’s coterie.

1310–12 Nuwayrī is sent to Tripoli (Lebanon), where he serves as head of the chancery (*dīwān al-inshā’*) and the Bureau of the Army (*dīwān al-jaysh*).

1312–c. 1316 Nuwayrī returns to Cairo and is put in charge of overseeing the financial revenues of two provinces, al-Daqhaliyya and al-Murtāhiyya.

1314 In this year, al-Nuwayrī embarks upon the composition of *The Ultimate Ambition*.

1316 al-Nāsir’s cadastral survey (*rawk*) of Egypt is complete.

1321 Nuwayrī begins making a second manuscript copy of *The Ultimate Ambition*.

1327 Death in Cairo of envoys from Pope John XXII.

Death 5 of 1333 al-Nuwayrī, in Cairo.

List of Abbreviations

Nihāyatayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*. Cairo: al-Muassasa al-Misriyya al-Āmma lil-T’Alif wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Tibāa wa-l-Nashr, 1923–97.

DNuwayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2004.

ETTh. Houtsma et al., eds. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 1908–34.

EAA. R. Gibb et al., eds. *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*. Leiden: Brill, 1954–2009.

ETrc Garborieau et al., eds. *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*. Leiden: Brill, 2007–.

Beizyhart Peter Anne Dozy. *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*. Beirut: Librarie Liban, 1968. Reprint of the edition published in Leyden, 1881.

Edneard William Lane. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968. Reprint of the first edition published from 1863–93 by Williams and Norgate, London.

HaFaHava Al-Farā’id: *Arabic-English Dictionary*. Beirut: Catholic Press, 1964. Reprint of the first edition published in 1899.

Qhe Quran, relying on a variety of translations including ones by A. J. Arberry, Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall, et al.

After *hijra*, indicating the year according to the Islamic lunar calendar (which begins in 622 CE, the year of Muhammad’s migration to Medina from Mecca). Death dates are given according to both Islamic (AH) and Common Era (CE) calendars.

§References to books (*funūn*), sections (*aqṣām*), and chapters (*abwāb*) in *The Ultimate Ambition* are signaled using the symbol (§). For example, §1.2.3 refers to book 1, section 2, chapter 3. See the appendix for the work’s table of contents.

Preface

Among the worthiest things to adorn the pages of books and to be uttered by the tongues of pens from the mouths of inkstands is the art of literature (*adab*).^{*} The sharp-witted produce it and the highborn claim descent from it. The scribe makes it the means by which he achieves his ends and the path that never leads him astray. When he encamps in its valley, his deserts become cultivated, and when he visits its watering places, he deems them to be sweet. He descends into its courtyard and finds it ample and spacious, and ponders its quandaries only to have their explanations made clear.^{*}

I was one of those who journeyed through the deserts of literature, yet refrained from joining the gatherings of literati. Secretaryship was the branch in whose shade I reposed, and the field in which I mastered old and new principles. I knew its manifest aspects and discovered its hidden ones. I opened the account books and determined on their basis the increase of profits, and in this respect I was as brilliant as a fire on a hilltop. I had laws repealed, I calibrated scales . . . and I mastered the materials of this craft and traded in it with the most valuable merchandise.

Then I put secretaryship behind me and decided to leave it privately if not publicly. I asked God to allow me to dispense with it and implored Him for that which He is more able to provide. I sought out the craft of literature and I became devoted to it, enlisting in the path of its masters. But I knew that I could not achieve my goal by gleaning knowledge from the mouths of the cultivated, nor would my path become clear so long as I applied my efforts foolishly.

So, I mounted the stallion of reading and galloped in the field of consultation. When the steed became obedient to me and its water sources were revealed, I chose to abstract from my reading a book that would keep me company, that I could consult, and that I would rely upon when faced with certain tasks. I called upon God Most High, and produced a work comprising five books, arranged harmoniously and clearly, with each book divided into five sections.^{*}

When its chapters were completed, and its whole and parts were united, I named it *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*. Through it, I achieved my goal and purpose, securing the essential and banishing the incidental, adorning it with the necklace of my own sayings, and the pearls of my predecessors. My own words in it are

like the night clouds leading the rain clouds, or the patrol followed by the squadron. They merely interpret the book's contents and frame them like eyebrows over the eyes.

I only included that which would please the senses, and had I known of any error in the book, I would have withheld my hand from writing and turned away. But I have followed the traces of those excellent ones before me, pursuing their path and connecting my rope to theirs. So if there should be any complaint, the dishonor is upon them and not me. I have learned that he who composes a book becomes a target, deafening some ears even as he pleases others.

May the reader who happens upon this book remedy its shortcomings and forgive the errors that he glimpses. Let the veil of your beneficence fall over them, and over my own faults. I have devoted all of my efforts to composing this book and exceeded my own capacities, but there is no escaping a slip of the pen. I seek aid from All-Glorious God, and upon Him do I depend. It is He whom I entreat to ease my way, His grace from which I seek aid. And in His name do I begin this book!

THE FIRST BOOK

ON THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH

In this book I have presented some descriptions of heaven, the focus of prayer and the gate of hope. And on the planets brilliant and sublime, and the angels with their wings: twofold, threefold, and fourfold. And the clouds, magnanimous with their rains over plain and hill alike; and the thunder, goading them to spill forth when the rain slackens; and the wind, scattering the clouds when they gather. Lightning, quick as an accountant's fingers and bright as the stained hand of Cassiopeia.* Snow, bestowing its silvery mantle upon the earth, and the rainbow, curved and tinted by the air . . . And on the nights and days, the months and years, and the seasons. And on the feasts, holidays, and those who observe them. And on the earth, the mountains, the steppes, the deserts, the islands and seas, the springs and rivers. And on the qualities of different places, and the manners of their inhabitants. And on buildings and fortresses, castles and other dwellings.

§1.1

The Heavens

God the Sublime said: “Are ye the harder to create or is the heaven that He built? He raised its height and fashioned it, and darkened its night and brought forth its forenoon.”

Q 79:27–29

ON THE CREATION OF THE HEAVENS

The Bedouin Arabs had many names for the sky, including the Encrusted, because of its abundance of stars, and the Forehead, because of its smoothness. It is also called the Veil and the Firmament, as in the Prophet Muhammad’s words to Sa’d ibn Mu’ādh: “I have passed judgment upon them according to God’s ruling, from above the seven firmaments”; in other words, the seven heavens. The sky has also been called the Roads; God the Sublime said: “And We have created above you seven roads, and We were not heedless of creation.” (Q 23:17) Heaven is made of smoke.

It has been said, on the cause of its creation, that God created an enormous jewel and gazed upon it with His terrifying gaze. The jewel then melted, smoking and foaming from the severity of its fear. So God created the earth from the foam and tore it into seven pieces, and He made heaven from the smoke and tore it into seven pieces. The proof of this is His word: “Then He turned to heaven when it was smoke. . . .” (Q 41:11)

When God split the heavens, He revealed to each one its purpose. The exegetes have disagreed on the meaning of this “purpose.” One said that God created mountains and oceans of hail within the heavens. Another proposed that God created a star in each heaven and set its rising and setting time, its procession and recession. Yet another said that God populated the heavens with angels and appointed them to the terrestrial world, putting one group in charge of the clouds and another group in charge of the wind, and making them custodians of the human race, the recorders of their deeds, and the supplicants of God’s mercy for their sins.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE HEAVENS

The exegetes of the Quran have suggested that heaven is outstretched [in space, like the earth], on the basis of God's word: "Do they not consider how the camel was created? And how heaven was lifted up? And how the mountains were hoisted? And how the earth was outstretched?" (Q 88:17–20), and the verse: "It is God who created seven heavens, and of the earth their like. . . ." (Q 65:12)

Abū Hurayra (a companion of the Prophet Muhammad) said: "The Messenger of God was once sitting with his companions when a cloud passed above them. The Prophet said: "Do you know what that is?" They replied: "God and His Messenger know best." He said: "The rain clouds are the earth's water bearers, which God steers to a people who do not thank Him nor appeal to Him." Then he said: "Do you know what lies above you?" They replied: "God and His Messenger know best." He said: "It is the firmament: a roof well protected, and a wave restrained." Then he said: "Do you know what lies between you and it?" They replied: "God and His Messenger know best." He said: "A distance of five hundred years' journey separates you from it . . . [and beyond that] there is another heaven, also five hundred years' journey away. . . ." And he continued in this fashion until he reached seven heavens, each separated by the same distance as that between the lowest heaven and the earth. Then he said: "Do you know what is beyond that?" They replied: "God and His Messenger know best." He said: "Above that is the throne of God, which is separated by the same distance as that between two heavens."

The astronomers have said much about the structure of the heavens, but I have disregarded it because it does not rest upon a clear proof. For that reason, I've limited myself to recounting traditional (*maqūl*) rather than speculative (*maqūl*) knowledge.

ON THE WANDERING STARS

God Most High said: "O but I call to witness the planets, the stars which rise and set." (Q 81:15–16) The exegetes suggested that these were the seven planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon. They said: "Indeed, these planets are the ones designated by His word: "By those that direct an affair!" (Q 79:5)

One of the exegetes of the Quran suggested that the light of the sun and the moon must be visible throughout all of the seven heavens, based on God's word: "And He set the moon therein as a light, and the sun as a lamp." (Q 71:16) The Prophet Muhammad said: "The sun and

the moon face up toward the heavens, with their backs toward the earth,” and also that “The sun is in the fifth heaven during the summer and the seventh heaven during the winter, just below the Throne of the All-Merciful.”

The exegetes have claimed that the movement of the sun and moon and all the planets are straight rather than curved, and that the sun crosses the sky in a single day and sets upon the earth, in a muddy spring.*

A poet once described the sun as it faced the moon in the sky:

Do you not see the sun as it rises
Preventing our prolonged gazes?
Red and yellow in its coloring
As though it suffered from sleeplessness
Like a bride on the morning after her wedding night
Shielding her face from the moon

Al-Mutanabbī once said of it, in censure:

The sun darkens the white skin of our faces
Yet does not blacken the white hair of our beards!
Surely their cases would be considered equivalent
Were we to appeal this judgment in an earthly court!

Wahb ibn Munabbih claimed that the moon sat upon a chariot in one of the spheres, which rotated in a westward direction upon the command of God the Sublime while the chariot was pulled by 360 angels toward the east. The chariot's rotation was due to the rotation of the largest sphere, while the rotation of the moon's sphere was due to the rotation of the chariot.

It is said that the moon was once as bright as the sun and no one could tell the night and day apart. So God commanded Gabriel to pass over it with his wings, which he did, and blotted it out. That is what accounts for the black markings one sees upon the moon. In this way, God's word was interpreted: “We made the night and the day two signs, and We blot out the sign of the night and make the day visible. . . .” (Q 17:12)

It is said that the moon should not be called a moon until three days after its first appearance. The word “moonlit” (*aqmar*) means “white.” It is said that the moon goes through five phases from the beginning of the month until the end, and its nights have ten names. Its five phases are the following:

The first phase, the waxing crescent, is when the moon emerges from under the rays of the sun and appears in the west at the beginning of the month.

The second phase commences when there is more light than darkness in the moon, and this is in the seventh night of the month.

The third phase, called the arrival, is when the moon is in the seventh solar mansion, and it is called full because the moon is filled with light during this phase. This happens on the fourteenth day of the month. The moon in this phase is called a full moon (*badr*) because of its wholeness. . . . The night before it (the thirteenth) is called the night of equality (*laylat al-sawā*) because the moon is fully symmetrical. It is also said that its night and day are equal in light.

The fourth phase has more darkness in it than light, and that is in the twenty-second of the month.

The fifth phase, the effacement, is the period of the moon's concealment by the rays of the sun . . . and this is on the twenty-ninth day. It may then disappear for three nights and reappear on the fourth, when it is properly called a moon, not a crescent.

As for the names of nights in the lunar month: the first three nights are called the gleaming (*ghurar*); the second three are the shining (*shuhub*); the third three are the luminous (*zuhar*); the fourth three are the outshining (*buhur*); the fifth three are the white (*bīd*); the sixth three are the dawn-lit (*dura*);* the seventh three are the intensely dark (*hanādis*); the eighth three are the obscure (*zulam*); the ninth three are the hastening (*daā'di*);* the tenth [comprise] two nights called the effaced (*al-mahāq*) and the concealed (*al-sirār*) . . . and the thirtieth night is called the darkest (*laylā*).

WORSHIPPERS OF THE MOON

Al-Shahrastānī said: "The worshippers of the moon are an Indian sect called the Handarbaktiyya, which means 'moon worshippers.'* They claim that the moon is one of the angels and is owed aggrandizement and worship, and it manages this sublunary world. All things develop to their perfection because of it, and time is understood according to its waxing and waning. It follows the sun and is its companion, and draws its light from it, and waxes and wanes because of it. Among the customs of the moon worshippers is that they place an idol on a cart drawn by four, and in its hand is a jewel. It is a part of their religion that they bow down to the idol and worship it, and that they fast half of every month, and they don't break their fast until the moon rises. Then they approach the idol with food, drink, and milk. They pray to it and gaze at the moon and ask it to grant their needs. When the new moon begins to appear, they climb onto the rooftops and light fires, calling out when they see it and praying to it. Then they come down from the roofs to partake in food and drink and happy celebration.

They only look at the moon with beaming faces. And during half the month, when they finish fasting, they dance and play the drums before the idol and the moon.”

ON THE PLANETS

The five remaining planets of the aforementioned seven are known as the confused stars.* Three of them are upper planets, occupying spheres beyond the sphere of the sun; they are Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. Two are lower planets, found below the sphere of the sun; they are Venus and Mercury.

The planets are known as the confused stars because they sometimes deviate from their eastward path and follow a westward path instead. This retreating aspect of their motion resembles confusion.

ON THE FIXED STARS

One authority on this subject claimed that these stars are hung from the heavens like lanterns, and that they are made of light. Others have said that they are attached to the hands of angels, explaining in this way God’s word: “When heaven is split asunder, and the stars are scattered.” (Q 82:1–2) It was said that their “scattering” was because of the death of the angels carrying them. These stars are mentioned in the Quran, when God said: “And We adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and set them to pelt the devils with. . . .” (Q 67:5–6)

Qat’āda said that God created these stars for three reasons: to be an adornment for the heavens; pelting stones for the devils; and signs to guide humans on their journeys across land and sea. Anyone who interprets this differently is mistaken.

The authorities say that the fixed stars were so called—despite the fact that they do move—because their distances with respect to one another are forever fixed. None of them may draw closer to another, nor grow more distant from it. Nor do they come closer or recede, or change direction in their movement. They move in a natural movement around the two poles of the world. For this reason, they are called fixed, and they are found in an eighth sphere apart from the spheres of the seven planets. The proof of this is that the seven planets move more rapidly than the fixed stars.

Some proverbs that mention stars include: “More distant than a star.” “Farther than the dangling hooks of the stars.” “Better guided

than a star.”

Ibn Waki' said:

Get up and pour me some pure wine
To rip away the gloom
Do you not see the morning has appeared
In the threadbare robe of night?
Do you not see that Gemini
Now lies upon the horizon?
A golden belt
Over a blue gown.

Meteorological Phenomena*

ON CLOUDS, THE REASON FOR THEIR OCCURRENCE, AND ON SNOW AND HAIL

Clouds are among the meteorological phenomena. Based on a chain of transmitters going back to ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr, Ibn al-Jawzī reported: “God sends a wind to sweep the earth, and then another to stir up the cloud, gathering its water and expelling it. Then He milks the cloud and it flows abundantly like a milch camel.”

It was reported on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās that he said: “God sends the winds, which agitate the cloud, and He sends water down upon it, which the wind shakes violently and brings forth like a she-camel in labor.”

It was reported on the authority of ‘Ikrima that he said: “God sends down water from the seventh heaven. Each raindrop is the size of a camel, but the cloud acts like a sieve, and so the rain falls from it in the proper size. Were it not for the cloud, everything on the earth would be destroyed.”

Al-Zamakhsharī said in his exegesis of the Quran: “Clouds come from the sky, which is where they [clouds] get their water, and not from the sea, as some have suggested. This is supported by God’s word: ‘He sends down from the heavens mountains, wherein is hail. . . .’” (Q 24:43)

Abū Mansūr al-Tha‘ālibī wrote in his book *The Science of Lexicography (Fiqh al-lughā)*, relating from his teachers: “When a cloud first rises, it is called *nash’*. When it is dragged along in the air, it is called *al-sahāb*. If it changes and makes the sky overcast, it is called *al-ghamām*. If a rain cloud rises at the edge of the sky such that you cannot see it but you do hear its thunder, it is called *al-aqr*. If it overshadows the sky, it is called *al-ārid*, and if it has thunder and lightning, it is called *al-arrās*. If a cloud is made up of little patches bunched close together, it is called *al-namira*, and if they are spread out, it’s called *al-qaza*. If the patches are heaped upon one another, the cloud is called *al-kirfī*. If it is black, it is called *takhyā’* or *mutataktikha*. And if you see it and reckon that it is a rain cloud, it’s called *mukhayyila*. If it is lofty and spread out, it is called *al-nashshās*.

If it is white, it is called *al-muzn* or *al-sabīr*. If its rain flows abundantly, it is called *al-jahām*, but it is also said that *al-jahām* is the cloud that does not contain any water at all.”

ON THE SEASONAL RAINS

The Bedouin Arabs say that when the rains first begin as the winter approaches, they are called *al-kharīf* (autumn rains), and they are followed by *al-wasmī* and then *al-rabī* (spring rains), then *al-sayyif* (summer rains), and then *al-hamīm* (midsummer rains).*

al-Tha‘ālibī said: “If rain revivifies land after it has died, it is called *al-hayā*. If it comes after drought or when it is especially needed, it is called *al-ghayth*. If it pours continuously and calmly, it is called *al-dayyima*, or *al-darb* if it is slightly heavier, and *al-hatl* if it is heavier still. Beyond that, it is called *al-hatalān*. If its drops are small, like tiny pearls, it is called *al-qitqit*. If the rain is weak, it is called *al-rahma*. If its drops are fat and fall heavily, it is called *al-wābil*. If the clouds are bursting with rain, it is called *al-buāq*. If it lasts for days without stopping, it is called *al-‘ayn*. If it floods the places it passes through, it is called *al-sahīqa*. If it effaces the ground, it is called *al-sāhiya*. If it strikes one parcel of land but misses another, it is called *al-nufda*. If it comes in showers, it is called *al-sha’ābīb*.”

ON SHOOTING STARS, THUNDERBOLTS, THUNDER, LIGHTNING, AND RAINBOWS

Shooting stars are the things that are seen trailing behind meteors and stars. It was reported that the Prophet of God once said to a group of his supporters in Medina: “What did you used to say [before the revelation of the Quran] about these stars that shoot?” They replied: “O Prophet of God, we used to say whenever we saw them shooting: ‘A king has died, and a child is born.’” The Prophet of God said: “That is not true. Rather, when God decrees something to His creation, the angels hear it and glorify Him, and then those beneath them also glorify God in response to the former’s glorification, and this continues until it reaches the lowest heaven, where the angels glorify Him and then ask, ‘Shall we not ask those above us why they are glorifying Him?’ The angels in the uppermost heaven then say that God has decreed such-and-such, and the news descends from one heaven to the next until it arrives in the lowest heaven, and the angels discuss it. The devils, meanwhile, try to eavesdrop upon them, and

take their fanciful opinions to the soothsayers, who sometimes divined correctly and at other times made errors. Then God prevented the devils from doing this by pelting them with these stars, so the soothsayers were excluded [from the heavenly news] and there are no longer any soothsayers today.”

The shooting stars that pelt the devils are different from the fixed stars that form the zodiac and the lunar mansions, as God’s word states: “And We adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and set them to pelt the devils with. . . .” (Q 67:5)

One of the poets said:

A star caught a devil eavesdropping
And shot down, a flame burning in its wake
Like a horseman in the desert who has loosened his turban
Its ends fluttering behind him

As for thunderbolts, al-Zamakhsharī wrote in his exegesis of the Quran: “A thunderbolt is a clap of thunder accompanied by a tongue of fire.” They say that the bolt is struck when different parts of a cloud collide. It is a thin, sharp fire that catches onto anything it strikes. Despite its intensity, it is quick to die out. However, when it strikes a palm tree, it burns the top of it.

The author of *Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts* wrote [of thunderbolts] in his book:^{*} “One of the amazing things about it is that it will burn something in a sack, but will not burn the sack itself. If the sack does burn, it will be because the thing inside it melted and flowed out. If it strikes a mountain or a rock, it calcifies it and pierces through it. If it strikes the sea, it sinks into it and burns what is around it. Sometimes, when its fire is extinguished in the ground, it makes it cold and dry, and formations of rock or iron or brass are created from it, and sometimes the iron is used to manufacture swords that cannot be resisted.”

As for thunder and what has been said about it, God Most High said: “The thunder proclaims His praise.” (Q 13:13) The exegetes say that the thunder is an angel in charge of the clouds and he has a steel cable that he uses to steer the clouds from one land to another, just like the camel driver steers his camel. Whenever the cloud disobeys him, he shouts and chides it. So, what one hears is the voice of the angel.

Al-Zamakhsharī wrote in his exegesis of the Quran: “When one hears thunder from the cloud, it is as though the different parts of the cloud are being disturbed and shaken when they are being driven by the wind, and they cry out.”

As for the lightning and what has been said about it, the exegetes have proposed that it is the thunder angel’s striking of the cloud with

a steel whip. It was reported from Mujāhid that he said: "God appointed an angel to the clouds, and the thunder is the din of his voice, while the lightning is his whip."

As for the rainbow (*qaws quzah*), they say that it is so called because of its colors (for the term means "a bow of streaked colors"). Ibn 'Abbās, however, used to hate calling it by this name and rather called it *Qaws Allāh* ("the Bow of God"). He would say: "Quzah is the name of a demon."*

On the cause of its colors and its formation, the Ancients claimed that when some quantity of air becomes condensed because of the cold, and the light of one of the stars shines on it, that portion of the air becomes tinted and the light bends from it toward the neighboring portion of air. This is just like when the sun shines upon a glass of pure wine, and its light becomes diffused and is bent into different colors. Its redness or yellowness has to do with its degree of humidity or dryness. This is analogous to fire, which has a turbid red color when it arises from moist wood and a clear yellow color when it burns upon dry wood.

Others said that the rainbow arises from the humidity of the air and its polished quality, such that it is possible for the sun to draw a circle upon it, just as figures are drawn upon mirrors.

ON THE DEFINITION OF AIR

Regarding the definition of air, Avicenna said: "Air is a simple substance. Its nature is hot, moist, and rarefying, and it occupies a position below the sphere of fire and above the spheres of earth and water." Hippocrates said: "The change in the states of air is what accounts for the change in the states of people, from anger to tranquility, anxiety and happiness, and so on. If the air's states are balanced, so too are the states and natures of people."

He also said: "The capacities of souls are based upon the temperaments of bodies, and the temperaments of bodies are based upon the changeable states of the air, sometimes becoming cold and other times hot, sometimes giving rise to ripe produce and other times unripe, sometimes in small quantity and other times in great quantity, sometimes hot, and sometimes cold. For that reason, the appearances and temperaments of bodies change. If the air is even and balanced, plants mature well, and people's forms and temperaments accordingly are duly proportioned. The reason for the similar appearance of the Turks is that when the air of their countries became equivalently cold, their appearances became similar."

Hippocrates also said: "The winds change the states of animals from

hot to cold, dry to moist, happy to sad. They change the states of food that are found in people's homes, such as dates, honey, and butter, making them hot at times and cold at others, hardened at times and dry at others. The cause of this is that the sun and the planets change the air through their movement, and when the air changes, everything changes because of it."

And others from among the Ancients said: "The air is a light substance, and when it blows from the east to the west it is called the Wind of Longing." It is said that it was called the Wind of Longing because souls long for it, due to the sweetness of its breeze. There is a saying that "No prophet was ever sent without being accompanied by the Wind of Longing." This is the wind that was made subservient to Solomon, "which traveled in the morning a whole month's journey" (Q 34:12), from the beginning of the day until the afternoon. And also "traveling in the evening a month's journey" (Q 34:12), from the afternoon until sunset.* The wind would arise in the morning in the Syrian town of Tadmur, would reach Istakhr in Persia by midday, and Kabul in India by the evening.

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The Messenger of God said: "I was helped by the Wind of Longing, and the tribe of Ād was destroyed by the western wind (*al-dabūr*)."*

SOME PROVERBIAL AND POETIC MENTIONS OF WIND

It is said: "Lighter than the breeze" and "Quicker than the wind."

"Theirs is the south wind" is said of two close friends.

"His winds are calm" is said of a mild-tempered person.

"His wind picked up" is said of someone who has had a streak of good fortune.

A poet said:

When your winds pick up, take advantage of them
For every fluttering is followed by stillness

And another poet said:

The wind becomes a gale
Only after beginning as a breeze

Ibn al-Rūmī said:

Ardent passion cannot be extinguished by disapproval, for it
Is like the wind, which goads a fire on to burn

Ibn al-Mutazz wrote:

The breeze covers the earth with dewdrops
As though it were the hem of a damp and gauzy gown
The land awaits the rain like
A lover awaiting the messenger's reply

Ishāq al-Mawsilī wrote:

How lovely is the southern wind when it blows
Gently in the morning
Bearing the coolness of dew, and
The perfume of *jathjāth* and fennel*

ON THE ELEMENT OF FIRE

The historians have reported, on the creation of fire, that when Adam fell to the earth and went on pilgrimage, he descended the hill of Abū Qubays, and God sent down to him two *markh* trees from the heavens.* He rubbed them against each other and they caught fire, and this is why the hill was called Abū Qubays (Little Firebrand).*

The proof that fire comes from trees is God's word: "He is the One who has given you fire out of the green tree, and lo! From it you kindle." (Q 36:80)

The Bedouin Arabs say: "In all trees is fire, but the *markh* and *afār* yield most," and this is because they are quickest to light.

The natural philosophers have written that God Almighty combined in fire the qualities of motion, heat, dryness, thinness, and light. With each of these properties, it has a different effect. It makes bodies rise with its motion, it warms them with its heat, it desiccates them with its dryness, it pierces them with its thinness, and it illuminates them with its light.

The human alone among all animals has access to the benefits of fire, and none have need of it but man, and nothing man has can replace it in any given situation. For this reason, the Zoroastrians exalt it, and they say: "If we humans are alone in profiting from it, then we must single it out in exaltation," even though they exalt everything that is of benefit to humanity. So, for example, they do not bury their dead in the earth [because of earth's benefit to mankind], nor do they purify themselves in rivers after excretion.

“The fire of sparks” (*nār al-hubāhib*) is said of a miser who lights a fire but then extinguishes it if someone else draws light from it. And it has also been said that this is the fire struck by horse hooves on rock, as in the Word of God Most High: “By the snorting chargers, striking sparks of fire!” (Q 100:1–2) And a verse of al-Nābigħa’s says: *Lighting with their swords, the fire of sparks . . .* *

This expression is used in reference to something that has no benefit and no usefulness.

“The fire of tamarisks” (*nār al-ghadā*) is proverbial of heat, for it yields white-hot coals suitable only for fuel.

“The fire of the *arfaj* plant” (*nār al-arfaj*) * is a fire that is quickly lit. . . . When the plant catches fire, it spreads quickly. It is also called the double-creep fire (*nār al-zahfatayn*) because when fire catches upon the *arfaj* plant, it grows very quickly and spreads, so that anyone nearby must creep away from it. But then it dies down just as quickly as it grew, so one is compelled to creep toward it again. Whoever warms himself at such a fire must do this, which is why it is called the double-creep fire. *

The Nights and Days

ON WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE NIGHT AND ITS DIVISIONS

There is such thing as a “natural night” and a “legal night.” The natural night is from sunset until sunrise. The legal night is from sunset until the second dawn, as referred to by God’s Word: “. . . until the white thread is distinct to you from the black thread at dawn.” (Q 2:187) The night is divided into twelve hours, each with its own name given to it by the Bedouin Arabs: sunset (*shāhid*), dusk (*ghasaq*), darkness (*atma*), blackness (*fahma*), the enfeebling hour (*mawhin*), midnight (*qit*), the heart of the night (*jawshan*), the disgracing hour (*hutka*), the foretokens of morning (*tabāshīr*), the first dawn (*al-fajr al-awwal*), the second dawn (*al-fajr al-thānī*), the widespread dawn (*al-mutarid*).*

Tamīm ibn al-Mu‘izz said:

It is as though the morning on the horizon were a falcon
And the night a crow between its claws

Abū Marwān ibn Abī al-Khisāl said:

When I saw the west overwhelmed by darkness
And in the east, the signs of morning
I imagined the west to be a river I was fording
Toward the bank visible in the east

Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Qurtubī said:

We spent the night as though cloaked in its mourning garments
Until the morning appeared in its white robe
As though this night, with the morning following it
Were an African damsel fleeing before a Greek

And on this topic is a story told about a Bedouin who married four women and wanted to test their intellects. So he said to one of them: “When morning approaches, wake me.” So when the morning drew

near, she said to him: "Rise, for the morning is approaching!" He said: "How do you know?" She said: "The small stars have set, while the most beautiful, brilliant, and largest among them remain. My jewels feel cold against my body, and I delight in smelling the breeze." He said to her: "Indeed, those are all signs of morning."

Then he spent the night with his second wife and said to her what he had said to the first, and when morning approached, she woke him and he said: "What suggests to you that it's morning?" She responded: "The sky is laughing from its corners, and there isn't a flower that hasn't diffused its perfume into the air, and my eyes want to return to their morning slumber." He said: "Indeed, those are signs of morning."

Then he spent the night with the third wife and said the same to her, and when morning approached, she woke him and he said to her: "What suggests to you that it's morning?" And she said: "There isn't a bird that isn't singing, or a piece of clothing that isn't cool, and the eye can see in the darkness, which only occurs when morning approaches." He said: "Indeed, those are signs of morning."

Then he spent the night with the fourth wife and said the same to her, and when morning came, she said: "Rise, for morning is approaching!" He said to her: "What suggests to you that it's morning?" She said: "I can't sleep, my mouth needs a toothbrush, and I'm in need of a wash."^{*} He said to her: "I hereby divorce you, for you are the foulest of my wives in your descriptions!"

ON WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE DAY

There is such a thing as a natural day and a legal day. The natural day is a span of time between the appearance of half the disk of the sun over the eastern horizon through its setting in the west. The legal day lies between the second dawn and the setting of the sun. There are two dawns: the "lying" dawn, which is an elongated whiteness [along the horizon], and the "honest" dawn, which is whiteness that is widespread.

The Earth, Mountains, Seas, Islands, Rivers, and Springs

ON THE CREATION OF THE EARTH

God the Sublime said: “He who made the earth a fixed abode and set amid it rivers and appointed for it firm mountains and placed a partition between the two seas . . .” (Q 27:61)

There are seven earths, just like the heavens are seven. The proof of this is God’s word: “It is God who created seven heavens, and of earth their like. . . .” (Q 65:12)

There is disagreement on whether these seven earths are located above or beside one another. Some claim that God created seven heavens, one on top of the other, and seven earths, one below the other. And between each earth—just like between each heaven—is a distance of five hundred years’ journey. This idea was used to interpret God’s word: “Have not the unbelievers then beheld that the heavens and the earth were a mass all sewn up, and then We unstitched them.” (Q 21:30) In other words, there was one heaven, and God unstitched it into seven pieces.

It is said that every earth has its own inhabitants, with different appearances and countenances, and its own specific name.

Some others have claimed that the seven earths neighbor—rather than overlay—one another. They list them as (1) China; (2) Khorasan; (3) Sindh and India; (4) Persia and al-Jibāl and Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula; (5) Syria and Armenia; (6) Egypt and Ifrīqiya (Northeast Africa); (7) the Andalusian peninsula and the neighboring lands of the Galicians, the Lombards, and the other Roman peoples.

It is said that the earth lies upon the water, and the water upon a rock, the rock upon the hump of a bull, the bull upon a sand dune, the sand dune on the back of a fish, the fish on the water, the water on the wind, the wind on a veil of darkness, and the darkness upon moist earth. Here ends the knowledge of created beings.*

Al-naq wa-l-aqūb is the dust that swirls around the hooves of horses and camels. *Al-ajāj* is dust stirred up by the wind. *Al-rahaj wa-'l-qastal* is the dust of war; *al-khaydaa*, the dust of a battle. *Al-ithyar*, the dust of feet.

ON THE SEVEN CLIMES

The astronomers hold the opinion that each clime is like an unfurled carpet, running from west to east lengthwise, south to north widthwise. The first clime begins in the east of China and extends to the cities at its gates, which are the rivers that ships enter from the sea to arrive at glorious cities such as Khānjū (Quanzhou) and Khānfū (Guangzhou). It contains the island of Sarandīb (Ceylon) and the parts of Yemen to the south of San'ā', like Zafār, Hadramawt, and Aden. It contains Dongola, from the land of Nubia, and Ghana, in the land of the Sudan. It ends at the Encircling Sea. Its width is from the equator to a latitude of 20°13'. Some have suggested that the habitable world begins at a latitude of 12¾° from the equator, and that the territory between that latitude and the equator is inhabited by some groups of blacks among the wild animals. Ptolemy counted sixty cities in the countries of this clime. The people of this clime are black, and it is sparsely inhabited because of the intense heat.

The second clime begins in China and passes over parts of coastal India, such as Tāna (Thane), Saymūr (Chaul), and Sandān (Sanjan), and from Sindh to Mansūra and Daybul, then reaching Oman. The Arab territories within it include Najrān, Hajar, Jannāba, Mahara, Saba', Uswān, Qūs, Upper Egypt, and the south of the lands of the Maghrib, up until it reaches the Encircling Sea. Its latitudinal span is from the edge of the first clime to 27°12'. Ptolemy claimed that it contained 450 cities. Its inhabitants are between brown- and black-skinned. It contains much gold.

The third clime begins in the east of China and contains its capital city Khamdān (Chang'an). In India, it contains the cities Tānash and Qunduhār (Kandahar), and in Sindh, al-Mutān (Mulasthana) and Quzdār. Then it passes over Sijistān, Kirmān, Fārs, Isfahan, al-Ahwāz, Basra, Kufa, the land of Babel, al-Jazīra (northern Iraq), Syria, Palestine, and Jerusalem. Then al-Qulzum, al-Tīh (Sinai), the land of Egypt, Alexandria, the districts of al-Barqa (Cyrenaica), Ifrīqiya (the eastern Maghrib), and Tāhart, Tangier and al-Sūs, ending in the Encircling Sea. Its latitudinal span is from the edge of the second clime to 33°49'. Ptolemy claimed that it contained fifty-nine cities. Its people are brown.

The fourth clime begins in China and passes over Tibet, Khotan,

then to the mountains of Kashmir, Wakhān, Tall Hassān, Kabul, al-Ghūr, Herat, Balkh, Tukhāristān, and continues to Rayy, Qom, Hamadhān, Hulwān, Baghdad, Mosul, Azerbaijan, Manbij, Tarsus, the frontier fortresses (*al-thughūr*), Antioch, Cyprus, Sicily, then to the Strait of Gibraltar and the Encircling Sea. Its latitudinal span is from the edge of the third clime to 39°20'. Ptolemy claimed that it contained 130 cities. Its people are between brown and white.

The fifth clime begins in the land of the Turks overlooking Gog and Magog, then to Kāshghar, Balāsāghūn, Farghāna, Isbijāb, al-Shāsh, Ushruwasana, Samarqand, Bukhāra, Khwārazm, the Khazar Sea, to the Gate of Gates (Derbent), Bardhaa, Mayyāfāriqīn, the passes of the Byzantines, and their country. Then it passes over Rome, Galicia, and Andalusia. It ends in the Encircling Sea. Its latitudinal span is from the edge of the fourth clime to 43°18'. Ptolemy reported that it contained ninety-seven cities. Most of its inhabitants are white.

The sixth clime begins in the territories of the eastern Turks, and they are al-Khirkhīz, al-Kaymāk, al-Tughuzghar, then to the lands of al-Khūz from their northern borders, and al-Lān, al-Sarīr, and the land of Barjān, then to Constantinople, the land of the Franks, and the north of Andalusia. It ends in the Encircling Sea. Its width is from the edge of the fifth clime to 47°15'. Ptolemy claimed that it contained thirty-three cities and has many people and much snow. Its inhabitants are white-skinned and blond.

The seventh clime is not much settled, for in the east it is covered by forests and mountains in which groups of Turks seek shelter like wild animals. This clime passes over the lands of the Pechenegs (Bajanāk), the Bulgars, the Russians, and the Slavs, and ends at the Encircling Sea. Its width is from the edge of the sixth clime to 50°½'. It contains a pit, a deep chasm that no person can descend. Nor can anyone inside climb out of it because of its great depth. There are people living within it about whom nothing is known; however, it is clear that the pit is inhabited, for smoke has been seen coming out of it during the day, and fire can be seen at night. A flowing river divides it, surrounded by the settled areas. Ptolemy claimed that this clime contains twenty-three cities, and that its people are white-skinned and russet-haired.

All that remains of the inhabited world is found through 63° of latitude, which adjoins this clime and considered to be part of it. It is inhabited by different groups of people who resemble wild beasts more than they do human beings, in their physical constitution and character.

The seas of the habitable world are three. The largest is the Encircling Sea, followed by the Mānīdash Sea (the Black Sea), and the Sea of the Khazars (the Caspian Sea).

As for the Encircling Sea and its islands, it is called Oceanus in Greek, and also the Dark Sea.* The only parts of this sea that are known are the coasts and islands that are near to the habitable world. Of those that are known, six are in the west, called the Isles of Bliss or the Eternal Islands (the Canary Islands).

It is said that in the east, bordering China, are six other islands, called the islands of al-Silā (Korea or Japan). It is said that their inhabitants are [descended from] the supporters of ‘Alī who arrived there after fleeing the Umayyads.* It is also said that no foreigner who ever visited the islands of al-Silā could bring himself to leave, due to the healthy properties of its air and the sweetness of its water, even if life was difficult there.

Of the inhabited islands in this sea is the island of Britain, which is opposite the Andalusian peninsula. Its inhabitants have red hair and blue eyes. And of the lands that border France are islands overrun by a species of Franks who do not obey anyone or follow any religion. Bordering the continent* is an island that is 750 square miles and is full of towers. It has four cities, and in each one is a king.

There is also the island of Rifāa, which is four hundred square miles and contains three prosperous cities.* Few have been there, and there is much rain and weather. Its inhabitants gather their crops before they have fully dried, because of the limited sunlight. They put the harvest in a house and light a fire around it so that it may dry.*

The island of England has prosperous cities, lofty mountains, valleys, and plains. The rain there is constant. Between this island and the continent is a distance of twelve miles.

And bordering the Slavs are two islands: one of them is called the Amazonian Island of the Women, and it is inhabited only by women. The other one is called the Amazonian Island of the Men, and it is only inhabited by men.* Every year, they come together during the spring, copulate for about a month, and then part. It is said that one can hardly see these two islands because of the quantity of clouds surrounding them, the darkness of the sea, and the size of the waves.

The Natures of Different Nations and the Inherent Dispositions of Their Inhabitants

Muhammad ibn Habīb said: When God the Sublime created the world, He created ten virtues and vices: faith, shame, courage, discord, nobility, hypocrisy, wealth, poverty, humility, and misfortune. Faith said: “I am off to Yemen,” and Shame said, “I’m coming with you.” Then Courage said: “I’m off to Syria,” and Discord said: “I’m coming with you.” Then Nobility said: “I’m off to Iraq,” and Hypocrisy said: “I’m coming with you.” Then Wealth said: “I’m off to Egypt,” and Humility said: “I’m coming with you.” And Poverty said: “I’m off to the desert,” and Misfortune said: “I’m coming with you.”

Al-Jāhiz once said: “Just as we were taught the Quran in school, so too were we taught the following: ‘Beware the stupidity of the people of Bukhāra, the malice of the people of Merv, the discord of the people of Nishapur, the envy of the people of Herat, and the spite of the people of Sijistān.’”

ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT LANDS

Let us begin with an account of Mecca and Yathrib (Medina), explaining what we transmit without mystifying it, and connecting this with an account of Jerusalem and the Mosque of al-Aqsā. Let exhaustiveness not be a requirement of this treatment, for the virtues of these cities are uncountable.

As for Mecca, honored and aggrandized by God, its virtues are widely known and manifest. God Most High said: “The first House established for the people was that at Bakka, a place holy, and a guidance to all beings. Therein are clear signs—the station of Abraham, and whosoever enters it is in security.” (Q 3:96–97)* And God also said: “And remember when We appointed the House to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary.” (Q 2:125)

Jerusalem is one of the two *qiblas* (the directions of prayer for

Muslims), and the Mosque of al-Aqsā is the third holy sanctuary (following Mecca and Medina). It is the destination for many travelers, a place of arrival and departure. The Holy Land is where the masses will crowd on the Day of Resurrection, and where God will enlarge the Noble Rock until it is as broad as heaven and earth.

ON WHICH PROPHETS WERE BORN IN EGYPT AND WHICH VISITED IT

Several prophets were born in Egypt, including Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Daniel, Jeremiah, Luqmān, and Jesus, the son of Mary. Jesus's mother gave birth to him in Ahnās, which is where the date palm that God indicated to Mary was found, according to one of the reports.* And when Jesus went to Syria, he walked by the foothills of al-Muqattam wearing a woolen gown tied at his waist with a cord, and his mother walked behind him. He turned to her and said: "O mother, this is the cemetery of Muhammad's people."*

As for those who spent time in Egypt, there was Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, peace be upon them, and the patriarchs of the twelve tribes. The prophets who became related to the people of Egypt by marriage include Abraham, who married Hagar, the mother of Ishmael. And Joseph, who married the daughter of the master of Heliopolis, and he married Zulaykha after she had grown weak and blind. Then God blessed her and returned her to her original state, and she bore a son. And our master, the Prophet of God, took Māriya the Copt as his concubine, who was given to him as a gift by al-Muqawqis (the ruler of Egypt), as I shall recount, God willing, in the biography of the Prophet.

ON THE SAGES WHO CAME FROM EGYPT, AND WHO FILLED THE WORLD WITH THEIR WISE SAYINGS AND WRITINGS, AND WHO REVEALED THE SCIENCES THAT HAD BEEN HIDDEN

Al-Hasan ibn Ibrāhīm (Ibn Zūlāq), author of *The History of Egypt*, wrote: "These include Dhu l-Qarnayn [the 'Two-Horned'], or Alexander the Great, who was from a village named Lūbiya. He was the one who killed Dārā Ibn Dārā (Darius III)." His story will be told, God willing, in the historical portion of this work, in the discussion of the kings of Greece.

Among the sages of Egypt was Hermes Trismegistus, who was

thrice-blessed as prophet, sage, and king. He is the one who turned lead into gold and built the two great pyramids, according to one report. And it has been said that he is the prophet Idrīs. Also among them were his two students, Agathodaemon and Pythagoras. Of all the inherited sciences, they are the masters of the crafts of alchemy, astrology, and magic, the science of amulets and talismans, magical temples, and the secrets of nature. Also among them are Awsilā, Sizawārus, and Empedocles, the masters of divination and zoomancy.

Also among the sages of Egypt is Socrates, author of works on wisdom and theology, known for his eloquence, and Plato, author of *The Republic*, *Laws*, and discussions of city-states and kings.*

Among them is Ptolemy, the master of star observation, land mensuration, and arithmetic. He is the author of *The Almagest*, on the celestial spheres, the motion of the sun and the moon, the planets, the fixed stars, and the zodiac. And he wrote a description of the nations that inhabit the earth, and the *Centiloquium* (*Kitab al-thamara*) on astronomy and map projection.*

And among them is Aristotle, author of *The Organon*; *Meteorology*; *Sense and Sensibilia*; *On Generation and Corruption*; *On the Heavens*; *Physics*; and an epistle entitled *On the Universe* (*Bayt al-dhahab*). They say that al-Kindī wrote about a thousand books excerpted from the works of Aristotle.

And among them is Aratus, author of the *Phaenomena*, which includes the forty-eight constellations comprising the picture of the spheres, and the one thousand stars, the twenty-two fixed stars, and the astronomical handbook. Also: Anatolios, author of the *Agriculture*; Hipparchus, master astronomer and inventor of the astrolabe; Theon, author of the astronomical handbook attributed to him; and many others.

In Egypt many of the sciences were born that made the world civilized and prosperous, such as Greek medicine, astronomy, mensuration, geometry, alchemy, and others, including the ten talismans. Among those who developed the science of medicine and taught it was Galen, the master of medicine, who studied in Egypt and learned from its books. Among them also was Dioscorides, author of the *Book of Herbs* (*al-Hashā'ish*), and Diogenes, Archigenes, Oribasius, Farīqūnūs, Rufus, and these are the masters of Greek medicine.

These sages and scholars of the world who bequeathed us their wisdom came from Egypt. She bore them, and their sciences spread from Egypt throughout the world.

Al-Hasan ibn Ibrāhīm said: "Students and teachers of knowledge have, from the very beginning, traveled to Egypt so that their minds would be filled, strengthened, and sharpened." And God knows best.

The Virtues of Egypt

Among the virtues of Egypt is that she provisions the two Noble Sanctuaries, Mecca and Medina. Were it not for Egypt, it would not be possible for people to live within them or their surrounding areas, nor could any person from any region of the earth travel safely to them. Also among its virtues is that it is the world's port, whose bounties are carried from its shores. From the Red Sea, its goods are shipped to the two sanctuaries, and to Jeddah, Oman, India, China, Sana'a, Aden, al-Shihr, Sindh, and the islands of the ocean. The ports of Tinnīs, Damietta, and al-Faramā serve the land of the Byzantines, the farthest extremes of the land of the Franks, Cyprus, all the coasts of Syria, and the fortresses up to the borders of Iraq. From Alexandria, Egypt is the main port of Crete, Sicily, the land of the Byzantines, all of the Maghrib up to Tangier, as far as the setting sun. From the region of Upper Egypt, it supplies the land of the Nūba, the Bujja, the Abyssinians, the Hijāz, and Yemen.

Among the amazing things about Egypt is that its people are self-sufficient, needing no other country to support them. Even if a wall were built between it and all the countries of the world, its people could do without everything the world contained, surviving only on Egypt's bounties.

There are things in Egypt that other countries do not have, such as the skink and the Egyptian mongoose. Were it not for the mongoose, the snakes would eat the whole country. They fulfill the same role that the hedgehogs of Sijistān play for its people.

It also has a fish called the electric ray. If a man grasps it or something connected to it—such as a fishing line or a net that it has fallen into—his hand trembles. Egypt has acacia wood, which, when it is burned for a whole day, its ashes only amount to a single palmful. It is a hard wood, quick to light, slow to die down. It is said that it is actually ebony, but that its habitat transformed its nature and so its wood became intensely red.

Egypt also has balsam oil and opium (which is the extract of the poppy), and labakh,* which is a fruit like a green almond, except that its edible part is on the outside. I saw this fruit in Egypt and tasted it in the year 693 AH (1294 CE). It also has the variegated citron.

As for minerals, it contains emeralds, petroleum, alum, talc, and marble. It has been said that it contains all the rest of the minerals as well.

Its people eat fresh fish from both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

In every month of the Coptic calendar, there is a type of food or drink or smell that is devoted to it and does not appear at any other time. They say: the dates of Thout, the pomegranates of Paopi, the

bananas of Hathor, the fish of Koiak, the water of Tobi,* the lamb of Meshir, the milk of Paremhat, the roses of Paremoude, the lote-tree fruit of Pashons, the figs of Paoni, the honey of Epip, and the grapes of Masori.*

Among Egypt's virtues is that its summer is like spring, and its winter is like autumn, and the fruits that go out of season in other countries because of the heat are found in Egypt in both heat and cold. That is because it lies in both the third and fourth climes, so it escapes from the heat of the first and second climes, and the cold of the sixth and seventh.

Its southern highlands are like the Hijāz, with rocky ground from which grow date palms and lote trees, milkweed, acacia, myrobalan, pepper plant, and *Cassia fistula*. Its lowlands are like Syria, with rain and snow, figs, olives, grapes, walnuts, almonds, pistachios, and all types of fruit, vegetables, and aromatic plants.

Ibn Zūlāq wrote in *The Virtues of Egypt* that Egypt's ruler [in the late eighth century] Mūsā ibn 'Īsā al-Hāshimī stood in the square by the Abyssinian Pool (Birkat al-Habash) in Cairo, turned to the right and left, and said to those who were with him: "Do you see what I see?" They replied: "What does the ruler see?" He said: "I see a wonder unlike anything in the world!" They said: "Let the ruler say what it is!" He said: "I see a hippodrome, gardens of palm trees, an orchard of trees, residential homes, a mountain peak, a cemetery, a roaring river, farmland, pasturage for cattle, grasslands for horses, and a coastline. I see a fisherman, a hunter, a sailor, a camel-driver, a sandy desert, smooth ground, and a mountain! Eighteen delights in a square mile!"

This is just a small treatment of the virtues of Egypt. Were it not for the desire to be succinct, its virtues could be the subject of an entire separate book.

Andalusia

As for the description of Andalusia, I have confined myself to an epistle in which Ibn Hazm describes it, saying:

"Its land is like Syria in its fragrance, like Tihāma [the coastal plain of the Red Sea] in the evenness of its terrain, like Ahwāz in the wealth of its tax revenues, like Aden in the bounties of its coasts, like China in its mineral wealth, and like India in its perfumes and fragrances. The people of al-Andalus are like Bedouin Arabs in their noble descent, honor, and pride, purity of speech, good character, rejection of injustice, scant tolerance for abasement and insult, and freedom from submission. They are like Indians in their devotion and love for the sciences; like Baghdadis in their elegance and purity, their graciousness and rarefied station, the subtlety of their minds and the

sharpness of their thoughts; like Nabateans in their skill at discovering where to dig wells for water, their efforts in plant cultivation, tree grafting, and agriculture;* like the Chinese in their mastery of intellectual crafts and the arts of illustration; like Turks in their war efforts, the manufacture of weapons, and their attention to materiel.”

We shall recount the state of Andalusia, the beginning of its settlement, and its kings in our discussion of its conquest. That is in the fifth chapter of the first section of the fifth book, on the history of the Umayyad State during the caliphate of al-W‘Alīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān in 92 AH (710-11 CE).

Baghdad

It is said that it is Paradise on earth, the meeting place of the Tigris and the Euphrates, the center of the world, the City of Peace, and the Dome of Islam, for it is the finest of all cities, the abode of peace and of the caliphate, a collection of precious goods and delicacies, and a mine of fine and delicate things. It contains the greatest masters of every subject and the unparalleled individuals of their age, of every kind.

Abū Ishāq al-Zajjāj used to say: “Baghdad is the cultivated part of the world. Beyond it is only desert.”*

And Ibn Zurayq al-Kūfī, the scribe, said:

I have traveled in search of something resembling Baghdad

And her city folk, a task that has been in vain

For, to me, Baghdad is the whole world

And her folk are all of its people.

India

It is said that India’s sea is full of pearls, its mountains full of rubies, its trees are all fragrant wood, its blossoms full of perfume. The aromatic wood of India (aloewood) is reckoned among the finest fragrances. Elephants are found in India, along with rhinoceroses, tigers, peacocks, and parrots. It possesses red rubies, white sandalwood, ivory, different types of aromatic essences, clothing made of velvet and other things, caps, and fabrics.

China

The Arabs refer to any glass curio—no matter what kind it may be—as Chinese because of China’s specialty in making curios. The Chinese excel at producing novelties and baubles, statues, engravings, and drawings. A Chinese artist can draw a human being so perfectly that the drawing lacks nothing but a soul. Still, the artist isn’t satisfied

until he is able to portray the difference between a gloating laugh and a bashful laugh, a cheerful smile and a surprised smile, a delighted or scornful chuckle, or to set one picture within another one.

In China are found grease lanterns that, if they become dirty and are thrown in the fire, are purified and do not burn. It also possesses iron, which sometimes is purchased for many times its weight in silver. It also has the *fārḥānī* squirrel, which has one of the most valuable furs, and fine felts. Al-Jāhiz wrote in his book *Inquiry into Commerce* that the best felts are the Chinese, followed by the Maghribī reds and the Talekani whites.

Samarqand

When Qutayba ibn Muslim looked upon Samarqand, he said to his companions: “Describe it!” When they couldn’t come up with anything, he said: “It resembles the sky in its dark color, and its palaces are like brilliant stars, its rivers like the Milky Way.” They found this simile to be beautiful. Among its unique features is its paper, which replaced the papyrus of Egypt and the parchment that the Ancients used to write on, because it is finer, smoother, more useful, and thinner. It can only be found in Samarqand and in China. It is also known for the fine garments from the village of Wadhār, sal ammoniac, quicksilver, and hazelnuts.

The Lands of the Turks

It is said that it rivals India in its quantity of unique features. It possesses musk, squirrel, sable, ermine, mink, black foxes, white rabbits, and other things. And it has falcons and horses. Tibet, which is in the lands of the Turks, has a unique quality: whoever lives in it is overcome with inexplicable happiness and cannot stop smiling and laughing. Also, when someone dies in Tibet, his family is not terribly saddened in the way that others are saddened by the death of a loved one.

The Lands of the Khwārazm

They are close to the lands of the Turks and vie with them in their unique features and commercial goods. Among its specialties is its melon, which they call the red (*al-nāranj*). They say that it’s the sweetest and most delicious of all melons. These fruits used to be sent to the caliphs al-Ma’mūn and al-Wāthiq in leaden containers filled with ice. A single one of them—if it arrived safely—was worth seven hundred dirhams. God knows best.

ON MAGICAL QUALITIES OF SOME CITIES

In Khabīs, one of the cities of Kirmān, it never rains within its walls. And even if a man puts his hand outside the city walls, it will get wet but his forearm will not.

And in Hisn Ādī, one of the villages of Kirmān, there are no rats. When a rat enters the village, it dies.

In Homs there are no scorpions, and if some soil from Homs is sprinkled on the back of a scorpion, it dies. The same is true of the fortress of Aʿzāz, in the district of Aleppo. It is said that no snakes enter the city of Aleppo, and if any of its soil is sprinkled on a snake, it dies immediately. No gnats are ever found in it, and if a man puts his hand outside its walls, a gnat might alight upon it; when he brings it inside, the gnat flies away.

In Cairo, when the Nile waters bring crocodiles into the city, they turn onto their backs and don't hurt anyone if they are avoided. The opposite is the case in Upper Egypt, where the crocodiles attack whatever animals they find, even horses, and nothing can overpower them but the water buffalo.

In the city of Sijilmāsa, there are no flies to be found.

ON QUALITIES OF PLACES WITH RESPECT TO DIFFERENT THINGS SUCH AS KNOWLEDGE, WORK, GEMS, CLOTHES, FURS, CARPETS, STEEDS, POISONOUS ANIMALS, SWEETS, FRUITS, AROMATICS, PHYSICAL FEATURES AND MANNERS, DISEASES, AND METEOROLOGICAL PHENOMENA

As for intellectual and professional qualities, one talks about the sages of Greece, the doctors of Jundaysābūr, the jewelers of Harrān, the weavers of Yemen, and the scribes of al-Sawʿād (in Iraq).

With jewels, one talks of the turquoise of Nishapur, the rubies of Sarandīb (Sri Lanka), the pearls of Oman, the emeralds of Egypt, the carnelian of Yemen, the onyx of Zafār, the garnets of Balkh, and the coral of Ifrīqiya.

As for clothing, one hears of the striped garments of Yemen, the embroidery of Sanʿāʾ, the thin singlets of Syria, the colored linen garments of Egypt, the brocade of the Byzantines, the silk of Sūs and China, the wraps of Fārs and Isfahan, the embroidered silk of Baghdad, the turbans of al-Ubulla, the silken cloth of Rayy and Marw, the trouser cords of Armenia, the kerchiefs of al-Dāmaghān, and the stockings of Qazwīn.

As for furs, there are the squirrel pelts of Khirikhīz, the sable of Bulgaria, the fox fur of al-Kharaz, the mink of Kāshghar, the pelican plumage of Herat,* and the ermine of Tughuzghuz.

As for steeds, one speaks of the fine horses of the desert, the noble camels of the Hijāz, the work horses of Takhāristān, the donkeys of Egypt, and the mules of Bardhaa.

With regard to poisonous animals, one speaks of the vipers of Sijistān, the snakes of Isfahan, the serpents of Egypt, the scorpions of Shahrazūr, the yellow scorpions of Ahwāz, the fleas of Armenia, the rats of Arzan, the ants of Mayyāfāriqīn, the flies of Tall Fāfān.

As for sweet delicacies, one speaks of the sugar of Ahwāz, the honey of Isfahan, the sugarcane syrup of Makrān, and the molasses of Arrajān.

As for fruits, one speaks of the fresh dates of Iraq, the dry dates of Kirmān, the jujube of Jurjān, the pears of Bust, the quince of Nishapur, the apples of Syria, the apricots of Tūs, the pears of Nahāwand, the citrons of Tabaristān, the oranges of Basra, the figs of Hulwān, the grapes of Baghdad, the apricots of Herat, the bananas of Yemen, the walnuts of India, the melons of Khwārazm, and the beans of Kufa.

As for aromatic plants, one speaks of the narcissus of Jurjān, the roses of Jūr, the water lilies of al-Sīrawān, the gillyflowers of Baghdad, the saffron of Qom, and the sweet basil of Samarqand.

As for physical features and manners, one speaks of the ruddiness of the Byzantines, the black skin of the Zanj, the coarseness of the Turks, the churlishness of the Gīl,* the foulness of the Chinese, and the shortness of the people of Gog.

As for illnesses, one speaks of the plagues of Syria, the spleen disease of Bahrain, the boils of al-Jazīra, the fever of Khaybar, the madness of Homs, the sweats of Yemen, the pestilence of Egypt, the pleurisy of Iraq, the carbuncles of Persia, and the ulcers of Balkh.

As for meteorological phenomena, one speaks of the rain of Armenia, the summer rains of Oman, the thunderbolts of Tihāma, and the earthquakes of Dabīl.

Al-Jāhiz wrote in his *Book of Cities*: “Craftsmanship is found in Basra, eloquence in Kufa, effeminacy in Baghdad, boastfulness in Samarqand, error in Rayy, churlishness in Nishapur, beauty in Herat, chivalry in Balkh, miserliness in Merv, and wonders in Egypt.”

THE SECOND BOOK

ON THE HUMAN BEING

This book contains poetic motifs that are pleasing to the listener, delightful to the ears, adorning the pages like gems. They attract the shyest of hearts and souls, and are clear, expressive, and eloquent in their description of the human being.

It encompasses fine similes and sublime love poems; holy lineages and famous battles; ancient proverbs whose origins are elucidated; the superstitions of the Bedouins; the stories of the soothsayers; the omens of the idolaters; euphemisms that replace some expressions with finer ones; riddles that both conceal and reveal, gesturing at an idea in such a way that it recedes even as it appears to approach. Herein are praise poems like beacons in their tribute to the praised, and invectives that compel their victim to hide from the public in shame, and bawdy poems that readers may enjoy in solitude, making even the frowning face break out in a smile. Here too is a little of what has been said about wine and its addictions, and about the great musicians and conversationalists, and expressions of congratulation that raise high the banner of praiseworthy deeds, and expressions of condolence that lift the veil of sorrows, revealing eyes brimming with tears.

I embellished this book by recounting the ruler who spreads his justice far and wide, and raises the banner of virtue, and meets the obligations of war and its customs, and casts fear into the hearts of his enemies during their waking and sleeping hours, and continually bestows his beneficence over all of his friends, and oppresses his enemies with flying arrows and shooting spears, and spreads his justice and generosity over all of his subjects, and supports his cavalry with his infantry. For this is a ruler who combines the severity of might with the ease of liberality, replacing the bitterness of despair with the sweetness of magnanimity.

I discuss what the ruler requires in order to manage his kingdom, such as an excellent and indispensable viceroy who blunts the blows of life's vicissitudes with his determination and resoluteness, and who is an advocate for the weak against the strong. He inspects the condition of the troops and gives them his full attention and

consideration, ensuring that their numbers are adequate and their requests for horses and equipment are met. He sees to the protection of the kingdom's fortresses, the security of its roads and byways, the repression of the corrupt, the abasement of the apostates, and the dispatching of military squadrons.

The ruler also needs a minister who builds upon the foundation of this rule with the excellence of his own management, and who busies his mind with the matter of establishing public order. He orders the collection of revenues from the provinces and fills the administrative offices of the imperial government with qualified citizens. He examines the affairs of the various regions and hinterlands, and is content to delegate their management to trustworthy supervisors and competent workers.

The ruler requires a general of the army who, when called upon to confront the enemy, hastens to face the brigades, and gives his lances a draft of their blood to drink. I recount what has been said about the excellence of holy war, and what rewards God Sublime has prepared for those who spend their new and old wealth upon it. And on the sacrifice of the two precious things—one's self and one's wealth—for the sake of the Hereafter, and the separation from the two beloveds—one's home and one's family—to achieve one's hopes.

The ruler needs a judge who rules justly between people, giving precedence to the noble and the virtuous; an overseer of the administrative justice courts who will repel all iniquities from the citizens through his force, power, authority, and his informants; a market inspector who ensures that transactions take place according to their proper legal principles, conventional customs, and accepted standard; and a scribe of sound opinion and piercing intellect, to whom poetic motifs are led with the loosest of reins, and whose pages make sharp swords superfluous.

I have included in this book only such received knowledge as will be readily comprehended by the intellect, and I have arranged it into five sections.

The Life Stages and Nature of the Human Being

ON THE WORD *INSĀN* (HUMAN) AND ITS ETYMOLOGY, AND ON
THE STAGES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, THE DIFFERENT NATURES
OF THE HUMAN BEING, AND RELATED SUBJECTS

With respect to the etymology of the word *insān* (human), there is some disagreement among people. Is *insān* derived from the word *uns* (sociability), which is the opposite of *wahsha* (wildness)? Or is it derived from *naws* (movement), which is the opposite of *sukūn* (stillness)? Is it derived from *inās* (perception), or perhaps *nisyān* (forgetfulness), which is the opposite of *dhikr* (remembrance)?

Ibn al-Shajāri wrote in his *Dictations*: “The majority of the grammarians derive the word from *uns* (sociability).” And the proof of this is the existence of sociability among people, who become familiar and friendly with one another, as the poet wrote:

The human was so-named because of his sociability
Just as the heart was so-named for its fickleness*

Abū ‘Amr al-Shaybānī proposed that *insān* is derived from *inās* (perception), and his proof was the verse from the Quran: “Lo! I perceive a fire (*innī ānastu nāran*)!” (Q 20:10)*

Ibn ‘Abbās said: “The human being was called *insān* because he was entrusted with a covenant and he forgot (*uhida alayhi fa-nasiya*).” This is the most likely reason, but God knows best.

ibn ‘Abd Rabbih recounted the following report from Wahb ibn Munabbih in his book *The Unique Necklace*: “I read in the Torah that when God the Almighty created Adam, He composed his body out of four things. Then God bequeathed those things to Adam’s offspring and they flourished within their bodies, and Adam’s children multiplied because of them until the Day of Resurrection. These things were: moistness, dryness, heat, and cold. God created Adam from earth and water, and put dryness and moistness into him. The dryness of every corporeal body derives from the earth, and the moistness of it

comes from the water. Its heat is from the soul, and its coolness is from the spirit.”

After this first act of creation, God created four more things that are the support and foundation of the body, without which it would not be able to function nor could any one of the four function without the others: black bile, yellow bile, hot and moist blood, cold phlegm. Then God vested each of the first set within the second set, such that He made black bile the home of dryness, and blood the home of moistness, and phlegm the home of coolness, and yellow bile the home of heat. A body in which these four humors are balanced, harmonious, and stable is a body in perfect health and balanced composition. If one humor increases in proportion to the others, overpowering and rebelling against them, the three will become weaker on account of that. And if a humor decreases in proportion to the others, they will rebel against it and overwhelm it, making it weaker on that account.

Wahb said: “God placed man’s reason in his brain, his greediness in his kidneys, his wrath in his liver, his bravery in his heart, his desire in his lungs, his laughter in his spleen, his sadness and happiness in his face.”

It is said that man is called the microcosm because his head is analogous to the stars and his face to the sun, insofar as the world cannot exist without the sun just as the body cannot exist without breath. His reason is analogous to the moon because it waxes and wanes, departing and returning. His five senses have been likened to the remaining five planets,* and his thoughts to the fixed stars, his tears to the rain, his voice to thunder, his laughter to lightning, his back to the land, his belly to the sea, his flesh to the earth, his bones to the mountains, his hair to the plants, his limbs to the climes, his veins to the rivers, and his blood-producing organs to springs.

There are also aspects of the body that resemble the week, the month, the days, and the year. As for the days of the week: man’s body has seven parts, namely the flesh, the bones, the veins, the nerves, the blood, the skin, and the hair.

With respect to the months, man’s body has twelve governing organs or faculties, six of which are not visible (the brain, the heart, the liver, the spleen, the stomach, the kidneys) and six of which are visible (the rational faculty and the five senses). These twelve things correspond to the twelve months.

As for the days, the body has 360 bones, 248 of which are part of its frame. The human being may be divided into four parts: the head, the arms, the trunk, and the legs. There are 42 bones in the head, 82 bones in the arms, 40 bones in the trunk, and 84 bones in the legs. The remaining bones are condyles, which close the gaps in between

the bones. The body also has 360 veins.

As for the seasons of the year, the body has four humors whose natures mirror the natures of the four seasons. The blood is like the spring in its warmth and moistness. Yellow bile is like the summer in its heat and dryness. Black bile is like the autumn in its coolness and dryness. And phlegm is like the winter in its coldness and moistness. These humors derive from the fundamental four elements, which are: fire, air, water, and earth.

As for the sequence of life stages and the passage of time in a man until it expires, God said: “O men, if you are in doubt as to the Uprising, surely We created you of dust then of a sperm drop, then of a blood clot, then of a lump of flesh, formed and unformed that We may make clear to you. And We establish in the wombs what We will, till a stated term, then We deliver you as infants, then that you may come of age; and some of you die, and some of you are kept back unto the vilest state of life, that after knowing somewhat, they may know nothing.” (Q 20:5)

God also said: “We created man of an extraction of clay, then We set him, a drop, in a receptacle secure, then We created of the drop a clot, then We created of the clot a tissue, then We created of the tissue bones, then We garmented the bones in flesh; thereafter We produced him as another creature. So blessed be God, the fairest of creators!” (Q 23:12–14)

An authentic tradition of the Messenger of God states: * “Indeed, each one of you is composed in his mother’s belly over forty days, then he is a clot for the same span, and then a piece of flesh for the same span, then God Almighty sends an angel to record four things: his means of living, his time of death, and whether he will be wretched or happy.”*

ON THE IRASCIBLE AND ANIMAL SOULS

As for the irascible soul, its owner is concerned with competing with his peers, defeating his opponents, and increasing the size of his clan. Along these lines, when al-Hudayn ibn al-Mundhir was asked, “What is happiness?” he replied: “A banner unfurled, reclining on a couch, and [someone saying] ‘Peace be upon you, oh Chief!’”

When ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ahtam was asked what happiness was, he said: “Promoting one’s friends, laying low one’s enemies, and a long life full of health and prosperity.”*

When Abū Muslim, the leader of the Abbasid revolution, was asked what happiness was, he said: “Riding ambling horses and slaying giants.” When he was asked: “What is comfort,” he replied: “Bearing

the passage of time gracefully, and the might of the sultan.”

As for the animal soul, its owner is concerned with seeking comfort and is engrossed by an appetite for food, drink, and sex. The Persians organized time according to this animal nature, saying that rainy days are for drinking, windy days are for sleeping, cloudy days are for hunting, and sunny days for sitting.

It is said that when Ibn Khālawayh learned of the way that the Persians arranged their days, he said (quoting the Book of God): “They know an outward part of the present life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless.” (Q 30:7)

However, our Prophet separated his day into three parts: one for God, one for his family, and one for himself. Then he split his own part between himself and the people, and asked the elect to help the masses, saying: “Meet the needs of those who cannot reach me. He who meets the needs of such a one, God will aid on the Day of Resurrection.”

They say that the animal soul has the most power of all the different souls, due to its combining all of man’s passions, promoting comfort and the lack of work. And along these lines is the proverb: “Reason sleeps, while passion is awake,” as well as the proverb: “Passion is a worshipped god.”

Imru’ al-Qays was asked, “What is happiness?” and he replied: “A delicate maiden burning with fragrance, burdened by her ample curves.” He was infatuated by women.

ON THE DESCRIPTION OF THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE HUMAN BODY AND THEIR LITERARY REPRESENTATION

This includes descriptions of the sweet fragrance of saliva, fine conversation, a melodious voice, a well-proportioned stature, and the ways that women walk. The chapter is arranged according to the composition of the human body, in both its male and female forms.

Hair

According to al-Tha‘ālibī, and based on the authority of the master lexicographers, *al-aqīqa* is the name of the hair that a human being is born with. The hair on the main part of the head is referred to as *al-farwa*, and the forelocks are called *al-nāsiya*. The hair at the back of the head is called *al-dhu‘āba*. A woman’s hair is referred to as *al-far*, the hair on the back of her neck is called *al-ghafar*, and the down on her face is *al-dabab*. Any hair that extends abundantly beyond the earlobe is called *al-wafra*, and hair that falls upon the shoulder is

called *al-limma*. The hair of the upper lip (the mustache) is called *al-shārib*, while the hair of the lower lip is called *al-anfaqa*. Chest hair is called *al-masraba*, and according to tradition, the Prophet Muhammad had thin chest hair. *Al-shira* refers to the pubic area, and *al-isb* is the hair of the anus. A man's body hair is generally called *al-zabab*, but it has been said that this refers to a copious amount of hair in the ear.

Fath al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir said:

On the day of his bath, he loosened
Three ringlets, redolent with fragrance
And so I said, speaking to those curls:
Keep me company in these long sleepless nights.

ON WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT GRAY HAIR AND HAIR DYE, BY WAY OF PRAISE AND CENSURE

As for the praise of gray hair, the Prophet Muhammad said: "The gray hair of the Muslim will be a light for them on the Day of Resurrection." Ibn Abī Shayba said: "The Prophet of God forbade the plucking of gray hairs, for he said that gray hair is the light of the believer."

According to a Prophetic tradition: "The first person to go gray was Abraham, peace be upon him. So he said, 'My Lord, what is this?' and God replied: 'Dignity.' And Abraham said: 'Lord, increase my dignity!'"

As for what has been said in censure of gray hair, Qays ibn Āsim said: "Gray hair is the bridle of death."

Someone recounts: "I once rode out in the vicinity of al-Tufāwa, and I passed a woman more beautiful than any I'd ever seen. I said to her: 'Dear lady, if you have a husband, then God has blessed him with you. And if not, then tell me so.'

"She replied: 'And what will you do with me? There's something about me that will not please you.'

"What is it?' I asked.

"Gray hair,' she replied.

"So I wheeled my beast around and started to gallop away, but she called after me: 'Hold your horses and let me tell you something.'

"What is it, may God have mercy on you?' I said.

"She said: 'I swear that I'm only twenty years old and haven't found a single white hair on my head,' as she uncovered her tresses, black as coal. 'But I wanted to show you that we women hate your gray hair as much as you hate ours!'

“And so I fled, dejected and embarrassed.”

It was related that the Prophet Muhammad said: “Change the color of your gray hair, but avoid dyeing it black.” And the caliph Abū Bakr al-Siddīq used to dye his hair with henna and *katm* (a plant from Yemen).

The poets have praised hair dye, as for example Mahmūd al-Warrāq’s verse:

A guest must be greeted and treated according to his station
Gray hair is your guest, so greet it with hair dye.

And another poet wrote:

They said that so-and-so has not gone gray
My, how slowly his hair has whitened!
I responded to them: were it not for this business of hair dye,
The hidden would have been uncovered long ago.

The Face

Here are examples of descriptions of male faces:

A poet wrote:

I saw the crescent moon shining upon his face
And didn’t know which was brighter
For one is close at hand
While the other is distant to the eye
One disappears while the other is present
How can one compare the departing from the present?
The moon has many benefits
Yet the beloved’s benefits are greater

And Abū Nuwās wrote:

His face, when it appears, is like the moon
Shining above a sapling’s trunk

O you, whose worshippers have fallen
Into the gravest strife!
Come to me with that face of passion
For you have prolonged my sadness with your repudiation

As for descriptions of female faces, Ibn Sukkara wrote:

In the face of a woman I fell in love with
Were four things, never before united in another face:
Her cheek, a rose; her side-tresses, perfume

Her saliva like wine; her teeth, white as hail
Every part of her beauty contains things unseen
Consigning my heart to the charge of sorrow

On the clarity and fineness of the skin, Abū Nuwās said:

I cast a glance at his face
And spied my own reflected in it

And on brown skin, a poet said:

How can I not desire a gazelle
Grazing freely in the protection of a king
Its duskiness a mix
Of camphor and musk

Another said:

O you who spends his wealth
Upon the love of this fine gold-skinned one
How can silent gold, spent profligately
Compare to gold that speaks?

As for what has been said about black skin, specifically that of women:

Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Salāmī wrote:

Many a fair-skinned beauty has served me a morning draft
Of blame and reproach, utterly undrinkable.
Do I miss her forelocks or her temple curls, when I’m surrounded
By the locks and tresses of my dark-skinned lover?
It’s as though we were—may God prevent our separation—
O Ka’ba of musk, a falcon on top of a crow.*

As for the ways that traces of smallpox on the face have been described, there is the verse of al-Nājim:

O moon that pocked as it ripened
Acquiring beauty with those scars
It seems to me it sang to the morning sun
Which sprinkled it happily with stars

Another poet said:

To all of you who find fault in a beautiful face
With a few scattered marks, I ask:
What horizon does not have stars upon it?
And what fine clothes may shine without embroidery?

As for what has been said about eyebrows: *al-zajaj* refers to fine eyebrows that are long, and *al-balaj* are eyebrows that have a space in between them, which the Bedouin Arabs considered beautiful. When the eyebrows are connected, this is called *al-qaran*, which the Arabs despised [as they did] *al-zabab*, which refers to hairy eyebrows, and *al-maat*, which are patchy eyebrows.

The Eye

As for the eyes, their descriptions and beautiful qualities: *al-daaj* refers to eyes that are intensely black and very large. Eyes that are intensely white and black are called *al-baraj*. The darkness of an eyelid that has no eye shadow on it is called *al-kahal*. Long eyelashes are called *al-wataf*, and tradition tells us that the Prophet Muhammad had long eyelashes.

As for the defects of the eye, *al-hawas* refers to small eyes, and *al-shatar* is the inversion of the eyelid. Near blindness is *al-kamash*, day blindness is *al-jahar*, and night blindness is *al-ashā*. When it seems as though one is looking at one's nose (cross-eyed), this is called *al-qabal*, which is not as bad as being squint-eyed. When someone seems to be looking at you but he is actually looking at someone else (lazy-eyed), this is called *al-shutūr*.

If a person looks at something with both eyes, this is called looking. If he looks at something to the side of his ear without moving his head, this is called glancing sidelong. If he looks at someone quickly, this is called glimpsing. If he looks at someone with intensity, one says "he shot him with his eyes." If he looks at something with severity and intensity, one says "he pelted him and cast a sharp gaze toward him."*

If one looks at someone with wonder and contempt, this is called looking askance at. If he looks at someone in a friendly way, this is called gazing lovingly. If he looks at something in order to confirm its condition, this is called eyeing. If he looks at something while placing his palm to his forehead in order to shade his eyes from the sun, this is called squinting or peering. If he picks up a piece of cloth and examines it closely in order to ascertain its quality, this is called inspecting. If he looks over everything in a place in order to get a sense of it, this is called surveying. If he looks through a book, this is called flipping through.

ON THE SWEETNESS OF THE SALIVA AND BREATH OF THE BELOVED

A poet said of a male beloved:

O you, who denies me the sweetness of sleep, and grants me
Only the cloak of emaciation, and who leaves me like a mirage:
Who gave you license to deny me your
Honeyed saliva—oh you with your quivering spear
And your well-ordered teeth, your coal-black hair
Your eyes that spin webs of entrapment?

And on this theme, Bashshār ibn Burd wrote:

O you, with the sweetest mouth of any man,
Unexplored, save by the tips of toothpicks

On poetic descriptions of birthmarks:

My gaze is drawn to your face, like a pilgrim
It circumambulates you, oh Ka'ba of beauty!
Rubbing a birthmark on your cheek
Like the Black Stone in the Corner.*
Secluded in her quarters and hidden from view
Were she to appear, no night traveler would lose his way
With a birthmark on her cheek, a more beautiful sight
Than the black spot on the broad full moon

ON POETIC DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DOWN ON THE YOUNG MALE CHEEK

Ibn al-Mutazz said:

The sun scarcely resembles his brilliance
The moon hardly measures up to him
How could it be that his cheeks will not blossom
While watered by the rains of beauty?

Look at the coquetry gleaming in his eyes
And gaze into those calm black pools!
Look at the stubble upon his cheek
Like ants upon ivory.

POETIC DESCRIPTIONS OF BREASTS

Ibn al-Rūmī said:

Nursing their children at their breasts
Round, like the finest pomegranates
And full, as if bursting
When in fact they are empty of milk

Al-Sarī al-Raffā' said:*

The eyes of his onlookers gathered around
His haunches, like a second belt

Another poet said:

She has an ass below a slender waist
That oppresses us both:
It tortures me when I think about it
And tires her when she moves to stand up.

ON AMOROUS AND EROTIC POETRY, DESIRE, LOVE, AND
PASSION

Let us begin by addressing desire, for it is the motivating source of amorous poetry. When it alights within bodies, souls become cheerful and hearts are enslaved. Fancies are attracted, minds are at ease, tempers become even, and tongues announce the body's desire.

With regard to the nature of passion and its essence, the ancient sages and philosophers have discussed this along with others from among the Muslims, as we will explain.

As for the statements of the sages and philosophers, Plato said: "Passion is the movement of the empty soul without using thought."

Diogenes was asked about passion, and he said: "It is the encounter between a poor volition and an empty soul."

Aristotle said: "Passion is the blindness of the senses to the blemishes of the beloved."

Pythagoras said: "Passion is a state generated in the heart that moves and grows and develops, and gathers together the substances of desire. As passion strengthens, its master grows more aroused and obstinate, more persevering in his ambitions, more consumed by his wishes, more covetous of his goals, until this leads him to anxious grief."

It was to this sense of passion that al-Mutanabbī alluded when he said:

What is passion but heedlessness and ambition?
The heart exposes itself only to be struck.

One of the philosophers said: "I have never known a truth more similar to a falsehood, nor a falsehood more similar to a truth, than

that of passion. Its jest is earnest, and its earnest is jest. It begins in sport and ends in ruin.”

Another philosopher claimed that passion is a kind of disease, akin to melancholy.

As for the statements of the Muslims on this subject, it was reported on the authority of Abū al-‘Āliya al-Shāmī: “The caliph al-Ma’mūn asked (the judge) Yahyā ibn Aktham about the meaning of desire, and he replied: ‘It is the auspicious thoughts that a man’s heart falls in love with and his soul esteems.’ Then (the theologian) Thumāma spoke up and said: ‘Shut up, Yahyā! You should stick to answering questions about divorce or whether a pilgrim violates his ritual purity by hunting a gazelle or killing an ant. These questions of passion belong to us!’ So the caliph asked him: ‘What is passion, then, oh Thumāma?’ He replied: ‘Passion is an entertaining companion, an intimate friend, a sovereign master, and a conquering ruler, whose methods are subtle and whose ways are obscure, whose rulings are despotic, holding sway over bodies and souls, hearts and minds, eyes and visions, brains and thoughts, which surrender the reins of their obedience to this master, and shackle their free will to it . . . !’ So al-Ma’mūn said: ‘Bravo, Thumāma, by God!’ And he ordered that he be awarded one thousand dinars.”

The truth is that passion is the strengthening of the soul’s inclination toward something that suits its nature. When the thought of that thing grows stronger, the soul imagines obtaining it and longs to do so. It is out of the intensity of this contemplation that a sickness originates.

ON THE STAGES OF PASSION AND ITS FORMS

They say that when one finds a person to be pleasing, this begins as a desire to be in their company and is followed by affection, which is a wish to possess something. Then affection deepens into love, followed by desire—which makes a person fall in love with the beloved without any self-control—followed by passion. Then it turns to infatuation, which is a state in which the beloved becomes the master of the lover, in whose heart nothing else may be found. Then infatuation intensifies and becomes passionate madness, which is a departure from the bounds of rational discrimination.

Passion is reinforced by prolonged gazing, abundant visitation, and long conversations. When this also includes embracing and kissing, its consolidation is complete.

The ancient sages claimed that when two lovers kiss, the moisture from the saliva of each of their mouths reaches the stomach of the

other and mixes into the whole body, reaching the liver. This is also what happens when lovers breathe into each other's faces, for as they breathe, their breath mixes with the air and they inhale that air up into their noses. It then reaches the brain, into which it spreads like light in a crystal vessel, and then it reaches the lungs, and the heart and the veins that spread through the entire body. In this way, something loosened from the body of one becomes mixed into the body of the other, and passion originates and grows out of this mixture.

ON WHAT HAS BEEN SAID BY WAY OF WARNING ABOUT THE
TEMPTATION OF WOMEN, AND IN CENSURE OF FORNICATION, AND
GAZING AT BEARDLESS YOUTHS, AND WARNING AGAINST
SODOMY, AND THE PUNISHMENT OF THE SODOMITE

As for what has been transmitted by way of warning against the temptations of women, it was reported on the authority of Abū Umāma ibn Yazīd that the Messenger of God said: "I have not left behind to the people who will follow me a more harmful temptation to men than women."

And upon the authority of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, the Prophet said: "The earthly world is sweet and verdant, and God has appointed you as its stewards so that He may observe how you act. So be on guard against the earthly world, and be on guard against women. For the discord among the Children of Israel began through women."

And upon the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, the Messenger of God said: "Satan once said to his Lord Almighty: 'O Lord, the human race has been brought down to earth, and I have learned that they are to have a Book and Messengers. What are they?'

"God Almighty replied: 'Their Messengers will be the angels and the prophets among them, and their Books will be the Torah and the Gospels and the Book of Psalms, and the Quran.'

"Then Satan asked: 'And what is my Book?'

"God replied: 'Your book is the tattoo, and your Quran is poetry, and your food is that which God's name is never uttered upon, and your drink is everything that inebriates, and your truth is lying, and your home is the bathhouse, and your snares are women, and your muezzin is the reed flute, and your mosque is the souk.'

"As for what has been said in censure of fornication, God's Word is enough: 'And approach not fornication; surely it is an indecency, and evil as a way.'" (Q 17:32)

The Prophet said: "After idolatry, there is no sin greater in the eyes

of God than a drop of a man's sperm in a womb that is not licit to him." . . . And there are many traditions on this subject.

As for the prohibition against gazing at beardless youths and sharing their company, Abū al-Sā'ib once said: "A beardless youth should be more feared by the worshipper than seventy virgins."

Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib said: "If you see a man gazing at a beardless youth, then rebuke him." And Sufyān al-Thawrī (a famous early religious teacher) would never allow a beardless youth to sit with him.

Ya'qūb ibn Sawwāl said: "We were once with Abū Nasr Bishr ibn al-Hārith, when the most beautiful slave girl we'd ever seen stopped by and asked him: 'Sir, where might I find the Harb Gate?' He replied (pointing): 'This gate is the one they call Harb Gate.'"

"Shortly afterwards, a young man stopped by and asked the same question, but Abū Nasr bowed his head in silence. The young man repeated himself, but Abū Nasr closed his eyes. So we asked the youth: 'What are you looking for?' He replied: 'Harb Gate.' So we said: 'It's right in front of you.'

"When he left, we said: 'Abū Nasr, a slave girl came to you and you spoke to her, but when a boy does the same you ignore him?'

"He said: 'Yes,' and quoted Sufyān al-Thawrī: 'A devil accompanies every slave girl, while with every boy, there are two devils. I was fearful of his two devils.'"

Muzaffar al-Qirmisīnī said: "He who befriends beardless youths, having only good intentions, will still be led to ruin. How, then, with he who befriends them with bad intentions?"

As for what has been reported by way of warning against sodomy and tribadism,* the Prophet said: "Cursed! Cursed is the one who performs the acts of the People of Lot!" And elsewhere, the Prophet said: "What I fear most about my people after my death is that they engage in the action of the People of Lot. For they can expect God's punishment if men are with men and women are with women."

Sufyān al-Thawrī used to say: "Even if a man sports with a boy servant by tickling him between two of his toes—while he has lustful intentions—this constitutes sodomy."

And the Prophet said: "The tribadism of women constitutes fornication between them."

As for what has been said about the punishment of the sodomite and the sodomized in both the earthly world and the hereafter, the Quran addresses the story of the People of Lot in many verses, describing their actions and how they were punished. Furthermore, the Prophetic traditions address the sodomite and the sodomized in such a way that indicates the severity of their punishment. For example, there is the report on the authority of 'Ikrima that the Prophet said: "Whosoever engages in the act of the People of Lot—

both the active and passive participant—must be put to death.”

Among the later generations and the scholarly authorities, there are other opinions. Some say that the punishment should be akin to the punishment for fornication, and that a distinction should be made between those who are *muhsan* (a person who is married, free, and Muslim) and those who are not.* Some say that the punishment is death, whether or not an individual is *muhsan*. Ibn Abī Najih reported on the authority of ‘Atā’ that the punishment of the sodomite is the same as that of the fornicator. If they are *muhsan*, they they must be stoned; if not, then they are to be flogged.

Mālīk ibn Anas reported on the authority of al-Zuhri: “The sodomite should be stoned, whether or not he is *muhsan*.” Ahmad ibn Hanbal is reported to have said: “He should be stoned, whether or not he is *muhsan*,” but it has also been reported that he said that the punishment of the sodomite is equivalent to that of the fornicator, and depends upon the question of virginity, which is also the position of al-Shāfi‘ī. Al-Hakam said that the sodomite should be flogged but not to the point of death, which Ibn al-Jawzī said was the preferred position of Abū Hanifa. And as for the school of Ibn Hazm al-Zāhiri, sodomy was punishable by a maximum of ten whips.*

This is all I have been able to present on this subject here by way of summary and concision. The stories about passion and what follows it and is generated from it are many, and it is not possible to include in books that contain diverse subjects more than what we have presented here. So let us now discuss some of what has been said about amorous and erotic poetry.

SOME AMOROUS AND EROTIC POETRY

This is a very broad subject. The poets have devoted a great deal of verse to this subject, with a variety of styles and tropes. Were we to explore it thoroughly, this book would be greatly lengthened. There are extensive books and large volumes on this subject, and we have extracted from them a few valuable pearls and precious things.

The poets have produced diverse forms of amorous poetry. They have rhapsodized about the beloved, mentioning them by name or by euphemism or metaphor. They would describe the beloved’s body parts and compare them to all kinds of things. For example, they might compare their eyes to the narcissus, and the effects of their gaze to wine or arrows. They’d compare the eyebrows to longbows, and the forehead to the morning and the hair to the evening, and sideburns to silkworm chrysalises and scorpions. The face they’d compare to the sun and the moon, while the cheeks have been likened to roses and

apples, and the front teeth to chrysanthemums. Dark lips are wine-colored, saliva tastes like the sweetest honey, lips are like agate, teeth like pearls, breasts are like pomegranates, torsos are supple branches, buttocks are sand dunes, and so on and so forth. All of this has already been presented in detail in its proper place, in the chapter preceding this one.

In this chapter I've presented some of what has been written about the male beloved, the female beloved, flights of fancy, replies to the blamer, the retreat of the blamer, the reunion of lovers, separation and division, bidding the lover farewell, on rejecting a lover, on visiting the lovesick former lover, emaciation as the result of love, on the lover's excuses, and so on.

Love Poetry About Men

A poet said:

The radiance of his face beneath his locks was like
A moon rising on a dark night
While the scorpion on his temples halted at his cheeks
Afraid of their fire and water
A moon, I beseeched time to bring him back to me
One day, but he spurned my pleas*

And Abū Nuwās said:

His face like a full moon
With a gazelle's eyes
The body of a boy
And the coquetry of a girl
In public, a man
In private, a woman
Exciting me with his curls
And ringlets
Above a smooth cheek
Lighting up the gloom

Fadl al-Raqāshī said:

That sly and brilliant one
Who grows girlish in his impudence
He appears manly at first
But after a drink is suddenly a woman
When you tell him: "Baby, say Moses,"
He lisps moistly: "Motheth"
He embraces me until morning
Trading stories with me in the dark.

Ibn Munīr al-Tarabulusī said:

If the full moon were asked, as it glittered: "Whom, on the earth,
do you envy?"

It would say: "That certain so-and-so . . .

He rises over me in his virtues,

Beautiful in voice and appearance,"

The haughtiness of Persia and the tenderness of Syria

The elegance of the Iraqi and the eloquence of the Hijāzi

And what heartwarming wine is more intoxicating than

The fluency of the Bedouin in the words of a Turk?

Love Poetry About Women

Sayf al-Dīn al-Mushidd said:

By my life! Were she to appear to the sun

From behind her veil

The sun would have hidden the beauties of its own face

In shame, taking refuge behind a cloud

‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Munajjim said:*

I compared her to the full moon and she laughed aloud,

Meeting my phrase with rejection

Declaring it insipid, she replied:

Just when did I become so ugly as the moon?

The moon does not gaze intently as

I do, nor does it smile so sweetly.

Does it shrug off a shawl from its swelling breasts

Or clasp a necklace around its throat?

He who would measure my qualities against the moon,

Must remain a prisoner of my abandonment.

ON GENEALOGY

God Most High said: "O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another." (Q 49:13) The genealogy of nations is among the areas of knowledge in which the Arabs boasted against the non-Arabs, because they paid careful attention to their own lineages and consolidated the means by which they were reckoned.

I came across the book titled *al-Muqaddima (The Introduction)*, composed by al-Sharīf Abū l-Barakāt al-Jawwānī. I raised a banner for this text and erected a ladder for it to the heights, because its author mastered the roots of this discipline and clarified its constituent parts. In this book he presented those aspects of genealogy that the assiduous might benefit from, and which the artful scribe may not do without. I found that he began the book with an account of the

Prophet Muhammad and his ancestors, explaining his pure lineage and that of his descendants.

I thought it best to recount this lineage from its origins, beginning with Adam and his descendants, thereby locating it within the genealogical tree of the father of mankind. I would recount those within the lineage who were well-known to the masters of genealogy, until I arrived at the noble name of the Prophet Muhammad, making it the seal of this lineage.

Al-Jawwānī, the august genealogist, wrote: The Arabs based the entire foundation and structure of their lineage upon ten strata. The first stratum is the stock (*jidhm*) or root, which may be traced to either Adnān or Qahtān. The underlying meaning of this term is “cutting off” (*qat*) . . . because of the abundant disagreement regarding the names and identities of all the ancestors chronologically anterior to this stratum. It became difficult for the Arabs to trace all of the routes and branches, so the treatment of everything prior to Qahtān and Adnān was *cut off*, and the discussion of genealogy was limited to what came after them, because of the broad consensus among the Arabs on the soundness of this material.

Along these lines is the saying of the Messenger of God with regard to those who trace their genealogy to Maadd ibn Adnān: “The genealogists lie about who came before him. . . .” because of the length of time that has since elapsed.

The descendants of Qahtān are called Yamānī, and the descendants of Maadd ibn Adnān are called Khindifī, Qaysī, or Nizārī, even though they are all in fact directly descended from Nizār, [the son of] Maadd ibn Adnān.

The genealogists say that Khindifī refers to everyone whose lineage is traceable to Ilyās ibn Mudar ibn Nizār ibn Maadd ibn Adnān, who is the origin of the Khindif people. The Arabs enlarged upon this subject and concluded that Ilyās is [the source of] Khindif because the mother of his sons (Mudrika, Tābikha, and Qamaa) was nicknamed Khindif. She was Laylā, daughter of Hulwān ibn Imrān ibn Ilhāf ibn Qudāa, and one day she was hurrying after her son, when Ilyās said to her: “Why are you hurrying?” That is why she was nicknamed Khindif, which means: “the one who hurries.”

Many tribal branches are descended from Khindif, including: Muzayna, Ribāb, Sūfa, al-Shuayrā, Tamīm, Hudhayl, Asad, al-Qāra, Kināna, and Quraysh. The descendants of Ilyās were known as Khindif, and then Ilyās himself was called Khindif. There are many such cases of erroneous attribution among the Arabs, such as with Mālik ibn Khuzayma ibn Mudrika ibn Ilyās ibn Mudar, who was called Āida because the mother of his children was Āida. . . . There are too many examples of this practice to enumerate here.

As for the appellation Qaysī, it refers to the line of Qays ibn Aylān ibn Mudar ibn Nizār ibn Maadd ibn Adnān. Aylān was the brother of Ilyās ibn Mudar . . . and some scholars say that he raised Qays but was not his father. . . . Of these two opinions, the first is sounder. [. . .]

Some have claimed that the descendants of Maadd ibn Adnān should all be referred to as Qays, but this is an error. They permit this practice inaccurately in order to distinguish between the descendants of Yaman and the other tribes. So they say (as a kind of shorthand) “Qays and Yaman,” and the listener assumes that these two individuals were brothers. But consider how distantly removed Qays was from Qahtān, the ancestor of the Yaman! Qahtān, the father of Yaman, was the brother of the twentieth great-grandfather of Qays, who was named Fālagh ibn Ābar.*

The second stratum is known as the masses (*jamāhīr*). The third stratum is known as the unions (*shuūb*). It has the status of the head in relation to a body. The fourth stratum is the tribe (*qabīla*). It lies below the stratum of unions and combines the smaller subtribes. It has the status of the breast in the body. The fifth stratum is the settlements (*‘amā’ir*), which is below the stratum of tribes. It occupies the position of the two arms. The sixth stratum is known as the stomachs (*butūn*). The seventh stratum is the thighs (*afkhādh*). The eighth stratum is the clan (*ashīra*), which comprises those descended from the same great-great-grandfather (i.e., four generations). It was so called because of the close association (*muāshara*) between a man and his clan.

When God the Sublime said [to the Prophet Muhammad]: “And warn thy clan, thy nearest kin” (Q 26:214), the Prophet called upon the nobles of Quraysh but limited himself to the descendants of ‘Abd Manāf, who shared a great-great-grandfather with Muhammad. This is where the custom of restricting the clan to four generations of descendants originated. This stratum occupies the position of the legs of the body. The ninth stratum is the kindred (*fasīla*), who are the people of a man’s household and his intimates. God Most High said: “The sinner will wish that he might ransom himself from the chastisement of that day by offering his sons; his wife and his brother; and his kindred who sheltered him.” (Q 70:11–13) This stratum is in the position of the feet. The tenth stratum is the family (*raht*), and it occupies the position of the toes. A family (*raht*) has fewer than ten people, while the extended family (*usra*) may have more. God the Sublime said: “Now in the city were nine men of a single family (*tis atu rahtin*). . . .” (Q 27:48)

To give an example of the division of genealogical categories: Adnān is a stock, Maadd is a mass, Nizār is a union, Mudar is a tribe, Khindif is a settlement, Kināna is a stomach, Quraysh is a thigh,

Qusayy is a clan, ‘Abd Manāf are kindred, and the Banū Hāshim are a family.*

Now that we have concluded our discussion of genealogical strata, let us now lay out the Prophet’s lineage, and may God grant us success: [. . .]*

Muhammad, ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim ibn ‘Abd Manāf ibn Qusayy ibn Kilāb ibn Murra ibn Ka’b ibn Lu’ayy ibn Ghālib ibn Fihr (Quraysh) ibn Mālik ibn al-Nadr ibn Kināna ibn Khuzayma ibn Mudrika ibn Ilyās ibn Mudar ibn Nizār ibn Maadd ibn Adnān ibn Udd ibn Udad ibn al-Yasu ibn al-Hamīsa ibn Salāmān ibn Nabat ibn Hamal ibn Qaydār ibn Ismā‘īl (Ishmael) ibn Ibrāhīm (Abraham) ibn Tārah ibn Nāhūr ibn Sārū ibn Arghū ibn Fālagh ibn Ābar (Hūd, ancestor of all Arabs) ibn Shālakh ibn Arfakhshadh ibn Sām (Shem) ibn Nūh (Noah) ibn Yārad ibn Mahlā’il ibn Qaynān ibn Anūsh ibn Shīth (Seth) ibn Ādam (Adam).

Proverbs and Parables*

God Almighty adduced proverbs and parables within many verses in His Book, saying: “O mankind! Here is a parable set forth, so pay heed to it!” (Q 22:73)

Al-Mubarrad said: “The word *mathal* (‘proverb’ or ‘parable’) is derived from the word *mithāl* (‘pattern’ or ‘example’), and it denotes a common expression that compares one situation with another. It is based fundamentally on comparison (*tashbīh*).”*

Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām said: “Combined within a parable are four qualities not found together in any other type of speech. These are: brevity, accuracy of meaning, a fine comparison, and a skilled form of indirect expression (*kināya*), for this is the highest form of eloquence.”

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE PROVERBS OF THE BEDOUIN ARABS

The Arabs say: “Some *rathī’a* appeases anger,” referring to a kind of sour milk mixed with fresh milk. It is said that a man was angry with a group of people, and also hungry. So they gave him some *rathī’a* to drink and his anger was stilled. This proverb was used to refer to a gift that produces harmony.

The Arabs also say: “Iron is cleft with iron.” In other words, fight fire with fire.*

“The gazelle has left its shelter” is said of someone who turns away from something and leaves it forever.

“He wounded him where the sorcerer dares not stick his nose” is something that Jandala bint al-Hārith once said. She went out one ominous night and a man spied her, leapt upon her, and deflowered her. She cried out: “I’ve been stung!” And it was said to her: “Where?” She replied: “Where the sorcerer dares not stick his nose.” This is said of someone who falls into a situation from which there is no escaping.

“I hear the mill’s clapping sound, but see no flour” is said of someone who is all bark and no bite.

“Starve your dog and he’ll follow you.”

“Goat a she-camel’s colt and she will cry out with emotion” means

that if one reminds someone of their sorrows, they will become aflamed. This is what the general ‘Amr ibn al-Ās said to Mu‘āwiya when he wanted the support of the people of Syria. In other words: “Show them the blood of ‘Uthmān on his shirt.”*

ON EUPHEMISMS*

There are many forms of euphemism. The best form is that which swerves away from an ugly expression toward a more brilliant one that indicates the same meaning. One example of this is to exalt a man by calling him by a nickname rather than his own name, or to call him by his son’s name (i.e., Father of So-and-So) as a way of protecting his own name.*

It was a custom of the Bedouin Arabs to use euphemisms in order to refer to things that they were ashamed to mention, as a means of preserving the modesty of their tongues, just as one preserves the modesty of all the limbs of the body. In the Quran there are such euphemisms that avoid direct statements in order to refrain from using condemnable expressions, such as God’s statement: “Your wives are a tilth for you, so come unto your tilth as you wish. . . .” (Q 2:223) Abū ‘Ubayd said: “This is a euphemism, for God has likened women to a tilth.”*

It is said that (the governor of Isfahan) al-Barā’ ibn Qabīsa was a drinker, and he went in to caliph al-W‘Alid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik one day with his face bearing signs of his drunkenness. The caliph said: “What’s the matter?” He replied: “I was riding a red-haired horse of mine when it stumbled and threw me.” The caliph said: “If you’d been riding the gray one, it wouldn’t have stumbled and thrown you,” referring, in this way, to water.

One of the caliphs of Egypt, al-‘Azīz ibn al-Mu‘izz al-‘Ubaydī, used to race doves. One day he competed against one of his servants, and the servant’s bird flew faster than his own. So the caliph summoned his minister, Ibn Kalas al-Yahūdī, to inquire about this. The minister was too embarrassed to say that the caliph’s bird had been beaten, so he wrote a poem instead:

You, to whom obedience is rewarded with security
And for whom the love of his subjects is a necessity:
Your bird was the victor, however
He arrived with his chamberlain preceding him.

ON ENIGMAS AND RIDDLES

A riddle: How is it possible that two women could encounter two men and say to them: "Greetings to our two sons and our two husbands and the sons of our husbands!"

The solution is that each one of the two men had married the mother of the other (after she had lost her first husband), and so they were their two sons, their two husbands, and the sons of their husbands.

Another riddle: How could it be that two men are one another's uncle and nephew at the same time?

The answer is that each of their fathers married one another's daughters, and each had a son. Those sons, therefore, are each other's uncles as well as nephews. *

Praise, Invective, Entertaining Anecdotes, Wine, and Music

ENTERTAINING, WITTY, AND BAWDY ANECDOTES

This chapter is on a subject to which all souls incline, and that all minds are in agreement about, a source of comfort for the weary and excitement for the fatigued. The soul, after all, cannot bear continuous labor and finds a change in affairs to be pleasing. So, if you engage it with entertaining stories from time to time, and oblige it with witty anecdotes every now and then, it will return to earnest work refreshed and renewed, pursuing knowledge with great ease.

The Messenger of God said: “Refresh your hearts every now and then, for weary hearts become blind.” And ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib said: “Rest these hearts of yours and seek out sources of wisdom for them. For the heart grows weary and bored just as the body does, and the soul is inclined toward pleasure and leisure, disposed toward amusement, demanding of iniquity, occupied by weakness, seeking comfort, and avoiding labor. If you coerce it, you will emaciate it, and if you neglect it, you will destroy it.”

The Messenger of God used to laugh so heartily that his molars would show. Ibn Sirīn laughed until he drooled. The caliph Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik once said: “I have eaten so many sweet and sour things that I can scarcely taste anything anymore, and I have sniffed so much perfume that I no longer find it fragrant. I have slept with so many women that I hardly notice whether I’m with a woman or a wall. And yet, I have never found anything as pleasurable as the companionship of a courtier with whom the vessel of formality and restraint has been shattered.”

Of all of the Prophet’s Companions who were known for joking, the most famous was Nu‘aymān. He was one of the Companions present at the battle of Badr, and there are many famous jokes and pranks associated with him. Once, he set out for Bosra, in Syria, with the caliph Abū Bakr. In the expedition was a man named Suwaybit, another Companion from the battle of Badr, and he was responsible for the provisions on the trip. Nu‘aymān went to him and said: “Give

me some food,” and Suwaybit replied: “No, not until Abū Bakr comes.” So Nu‘aymān said: “By God, you’ve exasperated me,” and he went over to some wealthy traders and said to them: “Would you like to buy an Arab slave from me who is lively and agile? He’s a bit of a talker and has a real mouth on him, and may tell you that he’s a free man. If you decide not to take him on account of that, then just leave him alone and don’t cause any problems between me and him.”

They replied: “We’ll buy him from you for the price of ten young she-camels.” So Nu‘aymān accepted and bound the camels’ forelegs to their thighs, and then said: “Look! That’s him” (pointing to Suwaybit). The traders said to him: “We’ve purchased you!” and Suwaybit replied: “He’s lying! I’m a free man!” They said: “He told us you’d say that,” and put a rope around his neck and left with him.

When Abū Bakr returned and was informed about what had happened, he went out with his companions and returned the she-camels to their owners, bringing Suwaybit back. Then the Prophet was told the story and he laughed about it for a long time.

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Here is another of Nu‘aymān’s pranks. One day he passed a man named Makhrama ibn Nawfal al-Zuhrī, who was blind. Makhrama said to him: “Please guide me someplace where I can relieve myself.” So Nu‘aymān took him by his hand to the back of a mosque and said to him: “Sit here.” Makhrama sat down and started to relieve himself, and the people cried out: “Makhrama! You’re in a mosque!” He said: “Who guided me here?” and they replied: “Nu‘aymān.” So he said: “By God, I’m going to knock him with my cane if I find him!”

Nu‘aymān heard about this and went to Makhrama one day and said: “Do you have a matter to settle with Nu‘aymān?” and Makhrama replied: “Yes.” So Nu‘aymān said: “He’s over there praying.” Taking Makhrama by the hand, he brought him to the caliph ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, who was indeed praying, and said to him: “Here’s Nu‘aymān.” Then Makhrama stood over the caliph with his cane, and the people shouted: “You’re about to strike the Leader of the Faithful!” And he replied: “Who guided me to him?” And they said: “Nu‘aymān!” And he replied: “By God, if only I’d never run into him!”

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As for the jests of the Bedouins, it is said that one day when the caliph al-Mahdī was out for a hunt, his horse got the better of him and galloped forth until they stopped before the tent of a Bedouin. The

caliph called out: "Hail, Bedouin! Might you receive me as a guest?" The Bedouin assented and brought him some bread that had been cooked under ashes, and the caliph ate it. Then he brought him some milk and the caliph drank. Then he brought some date wine in a leather skin and poured him a cupful. After the caliph drank it, he said: "Do you know who I am?"

The Bedouin replied: "No, by God," and the caliph said: "I am one of the servants of the nobility." The Bedouin replied: "May God bless you and your distinguished position," and he poured him another drink. When the caliph drank it, he said: "Do you really not know who I am?" The Bedouin replied: "But, I do, for you just said that you were one of the servants of the nobility." The caliph said: "Well, in fact, I'm one of the generals of the Leader of the Faithful." The Bedouin replied, "May your lands be spacious and your pastures sweet," and poured him a third drink. When the caliph swallowed it, he said: "O Bedouin, do you not know who I am?" The Bedouin replied: "You claimed to be one of the generals of the Leader of the Faithful." The caliph said: "No, I *am* the Leader of the Faithful himself!"

The Bedouin snatched the wineskin, tied it off, and said: "By God, if you have a fourth drink, you're going to claim that you're the Messenger of God!"

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As for the jests of those who claimed to be prophets, there was once a woman who claimed prophethood during the age of the caliph al-Ma'mūn. So she was brought to him and he said to her: "Who are you?" She replied: "I am Fatima, the Prophetess!" al-Ma'mūn said: "Do you believe in what was revealed to Muhammad?" She replied: "Yes, everything that he said is the Truth." al-Ma'mūn retorted: "But Muhammad said: 'There will be no prophets after me.'" Fatima replied: "Indeed, he spoke truthfully, prayers and peace be upon him. But did he say: 'There will not be a *prophetess* after me . . . ?'"

al-Ma'mūn turned to those who were present and said: "I have no response to this, so if anyone else has a good argument, let him produce it." Then the caliph laughed until he covered his face with his hands.

ON WINE AND ITS PROHIBITION

And on its afflictions, crimes, and names, on the stories of those who abstained from it during the Age of Ignorance, and those among the

nobles who were punished for consuming it, on those who were famous for drinking wine, and behaved dissolutely in public because of it, and the good poetry written about it, and the descriptions of its instruments and containers, and what has been said about pursuing pleasure, and descriptions of the drinking soirées, and so on and so forth.

There is a consensus that the drink named wine (*kh'Amr*) that is referred to in the Quran and forbidden therein is formed from grape juice that is fermented and emits foam, without being touched by any fire. If it is converted into vinegar, it is thereby purified, even if this process comes about without the addition of something to it (such as salt or vinegar). It is purified when it sours and is no longer intoxicating. Wine may also be formed from dates, as the Prophet said: "Wine comes from these two trees: the date palm and the grapevine." And the caliph 'Umar preached at the pulpit of the Messenger of God, saying: "My people, it has been revealed that wine is prohibited, and this pertains to five types of wine: date, grape, honey, wheat, and barley." Wine is what obscures the intellect.

There are four verses in the Quran that pertain to wine. Some entail that its consumption is lawful, while others regard it as reprehensible or forbidden. The first verse to be revealed, in Mecca, was God's word: "And of the fruits of the palms and the vines you take an intoxicant and a wholesome provision. Surely in that is a sign for a people who understand." (Q 16:67) At that time, the Muslims used to drink wine and it was not forbidden to them. Then God revealed this verse in Medina: "They will question you concerning wine and games of chance. Say: 'In both is great sin and some benefits for the people, but the sin in them is greater than the benefit.'" (Q 2:219)

Some people then gave up wine because of its sinfulness, saying "We have no need to drink it nor of anything that is sinful," while others drank it because God had said: ". . . and some benefits for the people." They enjoyed its benefits while avoiding its sins. This continued until one day when 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf invited some of the Prophet's companions to eat, and he served them some wine.* They drank and became intoxicated, and when it was time for the evening prayer, they had one of their fellows lead them in prayer. He recited: "Say: O disbelievers! I worship what you worship . . .," reading to the end of the chapter and omitting the word "not."* So God revealed the verse: "O believers, draw not near to prayer when you are drunken, until you know what you are saying. . . ." (Q 4:43), thereby prohibiting drunkenness during the hours of prayer.

When this verse was revealed, some people gave up wine, saying: "There is no good in something that comes between us and prayer," while others said: "We will drink it in our homes." They would abstain

from it during the hours of prayer and drink it at other times. This continued until one day when a Muslim man drank some wine and began to lament those who had fallen at the battle of Badr, and . . . [recited some love poetry instead]. When this news reached the Messenger of God, he became alarmed and went out, trailing his cloak behind him. He came to the man and raised a waterskin that he was carrying, in order to strike him. When the man saw him, he cried out: "I take refuge in God from His wrath and the wrath of His Messenger! By God, I'll never taste wine again!"

Then the Quran verse that prohibits wine was revealed: "Satan only desires to precipitate enmity and hatred between you by means of wine and games of chance, and to bar you from the remembrance of God, and from prayer. Will you then desist?" (Q 5:91) It is said that the revelation of this verse and the prohibition of wine took place in the month of Rabi' I, 4 AH (August 625 CE).

As for the afflictions and crimes associated with wine, they are many, for it is the "mother of crimes." The first of these afflictions is that it makes the intellect disappear, and the best thing in a human being is his intellect. Wine makes the ugly seem beautiful and the beautiful seem ugly.

As Abū Nuwās said:

Give me some pure wine
That leaves the old man like a boy
It makes the wrong course seem right
And the right course seem wrong

It is said that some people gave a Bedouin woman some liquor, and she asked them: "Do your women drink this?" They said: "Yes." She replied: "So, not one of you must know who his father is."

It was asked of the caliph 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān why he did not drink wine during the Age of Ignorance, when there was no objection to this practice (before the revelation of Islam). He replied: "I saw that it made the intellect flee in its entirety, and I've never known of something to do this and then return in its entirety."

Once, when the caliph al-W'Alid ibn 'Abd al-Malik was visiting his general al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf on an expedition, they were eating and the caliph asked: "Do you have any liquor?" The general replied: "O Leader of the Faithful, nothing that you deem to be licit could be forbidden; however I prohibit my servants from consuming it, and I hate to contradict what the Prophet said: ". . . I do not wish to do behind your backs that which I ask you not to do. . . ." (Q 11:88)

Among the afflictions of wine is that it disgraces the drinker because of its lingering smell, leading people to avoid him out of shame,

caution, and fear. It is impossible to deny having drunk wine when its smell is present. Governors can punish someone on the basis of smelling wine on their breath, because the smell remains in the mouth for two days after drinking it. So anyone who drinks some wine and is ashamed to go out among people for fear of the smell being discernible must remain secluded at home until his drunkenness recedes, his sobriety returns, and the smell dissipates.

Some drinkers have developed a trick to remove the smell of wine from their mouths, treating it with medicines that they concoct and consume after drinking. The finest of these medicines is produced by taking equal parts colocynth, fennel, galingale, elecampane, and cloves, along with two parts gum arabic. These are all pounded together, combined with rosewater, and then consumed. This medicine does indeed remove the smell of wine from one's breath, just as they claim.

A poet versified these ingredients into four couplets:

Colocynth, fennel, galingale
Elecampane and rosewater
Bound tightly together with gum arabic
Having added, at first, Indian cloves
Equal in quantity
But two parts gum, no more
For the bitter-breathed, it contains a cure
Preserving one's honor and keeping one's friends

ON SINGING AND LISTENING TO MUSIC

This chapter concerns singing and listening to music, and what has been transmitted on this subject with respect to its prohibition or permissibility, and the arguments that have been made on these grounds. It recounts the Prophet's Companions who listened to music, their successors, the great imams and pious forebears, the caliphs who were known for singing, their children, nobles, and commanders.

The question of whether singing should be prohibited or permitted has received much discussion and people's opinions, positions, and arguments have differed greatly. Some have regarded singing as reprehensible, shunning the practice of listening to it and arguing that it should be prohibited. Others have argued that the absolute opposite is true, insisting that it should be permitted. Still others have drawn a distinction between plain singing and singing that is accompanied by an instrument such as the lute, tambourine, or reed pipe. They argue that singing is permitted when unaccompanied but reprehensible when other elements are added to it, and they also claim that playing

any instrument is categorically prohibited. The advocates of each of these positions have their arguments and proofs, and I have seen fit to list a brief selection of them below.

Those who argue for the prohibition of singing point to verses from the Quran as evidence for their claims, along with Prophetic traditions and statements from the Prophet's Companions, their Successors, and the great imams of Muslim scholarship. Their evidence from the Quran includes the following verses: "Successful are the believers who are humble in their prayers, and who shun vain conversation" (Q 23:1–3); "And when they hear vanity, they withdraw from it. . . ." (Q 28:55); "Those who witness no falsehood, and when they pass near senseless play, pass by in dignity" (Q 25:72); "There are, among men, those who pay for idle speech in order to mislead [others] from the Path of God without knowledge and make it the butt of mockery. For such there is a shameful doom." (Q 31:6)

As for the evidence they point to in the Prophetic traditions, there is the statement from Muhammad's wife 'Ā'isha, who said: "God Almighty prohibited [the practice of keeping] singing slave girls, selling them, training them, and listening to them." And then she recited (by way of proof) the Quranic verse: "There are, among men, those who pay for idle speech. . . ."

There is also the report from Abū al-Zubayr on the authority of Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh that the Messenger of God said: "Satan was the first to wail in lament, and the first to sing." And 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf reported that the Messenger of God said: "I have been prohibited from making two types of foolish, brazen sounds: one when blessed with good fortune, and the other upon encountering calamity."

As for what has been said about the permissibility of singing, listening to music, and playing instruments such as the tambourine, the reed pipe, and all types of stringed instruments, people have written about these practices and argued that they are permissible, impugning the authenticity of the Prophetic traditions that argue for the prohibition of singing. They discussed the transmitters of these traditions and criticized their reliability as trustworthy sources, and they wrote long books about this subject, discussing it at great length and explaining all of their proofs.*

On the Ruler, His Subjects, and Advisers; and on the Craft of Secretaryship

Connected to this subject are the matters of the advisers, the generals of the armies, the description of weapons, the holders of religious positions, the scribes, and the eloquent ones.

ON THE LEGAL AND CONVENTIONAL CONDITIONS OF THE IMAMATE*

With regard to the legal conditions, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-H‘Alīmī gave a clear and lucid little account of them in his book *The Way (al-Minhāj)*.^{*} It will suffice for us to present it here, and we will limit ourselves to his discussion at the expense of other texts, for it summarizes most of the conditions concisely and accurately, as you shall see.

Al-H‘Alīmī said: “If the scholars of independent judicial reasoning (*ahl al-ijtihād*) decide on the nomination of an imam when they do not already have one, the first condition is that he be a descendant of Quraysh (the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad). The second condition is that he must be knowledgeable about the rules of religion with regard to prayer, collecting and distributing alms; and on the laws, and holy war, and dividing the spoils, and considering violations of God’s Law when they are referred to him, such that he may either administer a punishment or defer it. The third condition is that he be upright in his religion, his pursuits, and transactions.”

With regard to the condition of lineage, it derives from the Messenger of God’s statements: “The imams are from Quraysh. . . .” and “Give precedence to Quraysh and do not step ahead of them. Were it not that Quraysh would grow vain, I would have told them of their status in the eyes of God.”

As for the condition of being knowledgeable about the rules of prayer, alms giving, holy war, judgment, God’s law, and the estates

with which the imams are entrusted, it is not possible for the imam to give these matters their due unless he is learned. Only then will the guideposts of the earthly world remain standing and God's rulings remain in force among his servants. Furthermore, if he does not possess the sort of knowledge that will give him access to what the office requires, then it will be as if there were no imam at all. He must be bold and energetic, for the most important of the people's affairs is holy war. If he who assumes responsibility for their affairs is cowardly and fainthearted, this will prevent him from waging war against the idolaters, and will lead him to neglect many of the rights of the Muslims. His harm to them will thus be greater than his benefit.

As for the condition of uprightness, it is due to the fact that the imam who assumes responsibility for upholding the rights and claims of God (*huqūq Allāh*) and the rights and claims of the Muslims (*huqūq al-muslimin*) must be trusted to protect those rights.* It should not be the case that the person entrusted with the rights of God is someone whose perfidy toward God and his servants is plainly apparent. The faith of a sinner is deficient, and therefore he should not rule over such Muslims whose faith is more perfect than his own, just as an unbeliever should not be entrusted with any of the affairs of the Muslims. . . . Furthermore, since such a person is not willing to reform his own character—either out of neglect or the inability to do so—he will be even more neglectful and unable to reform others. This type of a person is furthest away from the position of the imams.

If the aforementioned qualities come together in a single man—even if the imam who preceded him designates this person as a successor during his own lifetime, either by appointing him once he is unable to perform his duties, or by being removed from office by him—then there can be no objection to him. And if his predecessor determines to bequeath power following his own death, then the legality of this action is even more apparent.

If one who meets all of the aforementioned conditions of the imamate is *not* entrusted to assume leadership from an imam before him—and if the Muslims are in need of the appointment of an imam—then forty righteous Muslims should congregate, among whom is a learned person who is suitable for adjudicating between the people. If they decide upon a man who combines all the necessary conditions that we previously mentioned after close examination and extensive deliberation, then his claim to leadership is established and allegiance to him is required. The scholar should open the session, and he may be followed by those who do not possess his knowledge and reason.

If someone from the tribe of Quraysh who possesses the qualities of the imamate cannot be found—which is very unlikely, and yet is possible—then, in that case, the imam must come from one of the

tribes closest to Quraysh. He may be from Kināna, due to the Prophet's statement: "God set Kināna apart from the rest of the Arabs, and He set apart Quraysh from Kināna." And if there is no one among them, then he must come from the closest Arab tribe to Kināna.* And if all of Ishmael's descendants are exhausted, one must not deviate to those of Isaac—even though they are closer because they are the descendants of Abraham—but rather continue on to the descendants of Abraham's Arab ancestor, and so on and so forth.*

If a learned but unrighteous Qurashī is available, along with a righteous but unlearned Qurashī and a righteous *and* learned Kinānī, al-H'Alīmī states: "My preference would be for the righteous Qurashī, because if certain parts of the office prove difficult for him, he may draw upon the opinion of the scholars." If the imam renounces the office himself without designating someone as a replacement—and if he remains perfectly suitable for the position—then this renouncement is not considered legally valid. For he was appointed to oversee the Muslims and his self-dismissal constitutes a source of harm to them, because he leaves them without an imam and forces them to search for a replacement, a process in which they may succeed or fail.

When an imam appoints governors and judges and then dies, his governors and judges continue to serve in their positions as they did during his lifetime, and are not to be dismissed. Their case is not like that of the trustee (*wakīl*), who is dismissed upon the death of the one who appointed him, and that is because trusteeship (*wakāla*) is a form of representation (*niyāba*), whereas the exercise of political authority (*wilāya*) is a matter of partnership.

This is what al-H'Alīmī wrote, and God knows best. These are the legal conditions that are absolutely necessary with respect to the imam.

As for the conventional and practical conditions, these include the fine deeds that a ruler should aspire to, and the repugnant qualities that he should leave aside.

Mu'āwīya ibn Abī Sufyān said: "A ruler should possess five qualities, regardless of what other traits may characterize him. He should not be a liar, for a liar's promises are not believed, nor are his threats feared. He should not be miserly, for if he were so, nobody would counsel him, and political authority may only succeed on the basis of counsel. He should not be severe (*hadīd*), for if he exercises his power with severity, his flock will perish. He should not be envious, for if he is so then he will never honor anyone, and no people may thrive without being honored. He must also not be a coward, for his opponents will dare to challenge him." The philosophers have said: "The ruler should be possessed of three dispositions: a willingness to delay punishment by controlling his rage; hastening to reward good deeds; and being

patient and deliberate in all that he does. By delaying punishment, he acquires options [to exercise his rule].* By being quick to reward good deeds, he gains obedience from his flock. And by acting patiently and deliberately, he gives himself to time to reflect and for the correct path to become clear. One of the Persian sages said: “The most judicious ruler is he whose earnestness outweighs his jest, whose reason controls his passion, whose actions speak louder than his words, whose contentment never blinds him to his good fortune, nor does his anger prevent him from acting strategically.”

ON THE QUALITIES OF THE RULER AND HIS CHARACTER, AND THE WAYS IN WHICH HE SURPASSES OTHERS

ibn ‘Abd Rabbih said: The ruler is the reins of power, the regulator of rights and claims, the mainstay of God’s Law, and the axis around which all religious and secular affairs turn. He is God’s protection in his lands, and God’s shade that extends over his subjects, through which he forbids the impermissible, aids the oppressed, restrains the wicked, and protects the meek.

One of the eloquent scribes wrote: The ruler is one whose deeds are whitened, and whose enemies’ days are blackened, and whose pastures are made green, and whose sword reddens its targets, whose enviers’ faces are yellowed, and whose friends’ eyes are delighted. It has been said that the ruler is set apart from others because of a distinction of innate qualities, rather than a distinction of possessions [. . .] such as sturdy and tall buildings, fine clothes, valuable treasures, delicious foods, and splendid steeds.

Here is a little of what has been transmitted of the sayings of the caliphs and the rulers that demonstrate their superior stature, their noble character, the extent of their guile, and the strength of their action.

It was said to Alexander the Great while he was fighting Darius III (Dārā) that his opponent possessed an army of eighty thousand men. Alexander replied: “The butcher is not afraid of an abundance of sheep.”

Once, the Sasanian emperor Chosroes (Anushirvan) chose a man to join his retinue. It was said to the emperor: “But he is not of high lineage,” and Chosroes replied: “My selection of him constitutes his nobility.” And when Hājib ibn Zurāra pawned his bow at Chosroes’s court [in exchange for the Arabs being allowed to pasture their animals on Persian territory because of drought in their lands], Chosroes said: “Were it not that the Arabs are worth less to me than

this bow, I would not have accepted it in exchange.”

When Alexander the Great was advised to launch a sneak attack upon the Persians at night, he replied: “I will not turn my victory into a theft.” And it was said to him: “Why not marry the daughter of Darius?” And he said: “I will not allow a woman to defeat me whose father I defeated.”

Chosroes used to say: “The ruler who increases his own wealth at the expense of his people’s is like one who builds the roof of his house using materials that he digs out from the foundations.”

ON WHAT THE PEOPLE OWE TO THEIR RULER BY WAY OF OBEDIENCE, SINCERE CONDUCT AND FAITHFUL COUNSEL,* GLORIFICATION, AND REVERENCE

Obedience is required of all subjects, for God Almighty conjoined the obedience to those in authority with obedience to Himself and to His Messenger. He manifested this unambiguously in the holy revelation, saying: “O believers, obey God, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.” (Q 4:59) Therefore, obedience is required by God’s command, which is confirmed by the practice of His Prophet. It was reported on the authority of Abū Hurayra that the Prophet Muhammad said: “Whosoever obeys me obeys God, and whosoever disobeys me disobeys God. And whosoever obeys the ruler also obeys me, and whosoever disobeys the ruler also disobeys me.” . . . And the Prophet also said: “Hear and obey your ruler, even if he were an Ethiopian slave with a head that looks like a raisin.” Therefore, it has been shown in the Book of God and in the practice of His Prophet that obedience to the ruler is incumbent upon every Muslim.

As for faithful counsel and sincere conduct, this obligation derives from [. . .] the Prophet’s statement: “Indeed, religion is sincere conduct! Religion is sincere conduct! Religion is sincere conduct!” The people responded: “Toward whom, oh Messenger of God?” And he said: “Toward God, His Book, His Messenger, and toward the rulers of the believers.”

As for glorifying the ruler and the etiquette of serving him and holding fast to his community, this obligation derives from what the Prophet Muhammad said: “The ruler is the shadow of God upon the earth, and whosoever honors him honors God, and whosoever disrespects him disrespects God.” He also said: “Whosoever sees in his ruler something that he hates should bear this patiently, for anyone who removes himself from the Community by the space of a single span will die as men died in the days before Islam.”

Ibn al-Muqaffa' said: A person who serves the ruler must do so diligently and without complaint. If the ruler asks someone else a question, do not answer for him. In snatching the opportunity to speak, you disregard both the questioner and the questioned. If the ruler does not direct his question to a specific person but rather to a general audience, do not be quick to respond and do not race the ruler's other companions, pouncing upon the chance to speak. For if you are the first to respond to the ruler, the others will become the adversaries of your position and will critique it and disparage it.

If you do not rush to speak and rather leave it to someone else to do so, you may examine his statement and reflect upon it carefully, pondering it and your own response. Then, you might prepare a satisfying response based upon your thinking and what you have already heard, and you will turn away the responses of others and make them pay attention to you, thereby calming your adversaries. If you miss the chance to speak and someone else's opinion is consulted before the conversation ends, this does not mean that you will have been cheated out of the opportunity to speak. For letting one's opinion remain unspoken is better than speaking out of turn. If the ruler speaks to you, then listen attentively to his words and do not allow your eyes to dart about, do not fidget, and do not be thinking about other things.

Do not complain to the advisers and confidants of the ruler whom you have come to know about a private opinion of his that you disagree with, for you will have made them aware of the ruler's trust in you. Do not befriend kings until you have trained yourself to obey them in matters that are reprehensible to you; to agree with them on matters that you disagree with; to appraise things according to their desires rather than to yours; to not conceal your secrets from them nor to arouse their curiosity about what you might have concealed; to keep their secrets from everyone else; to strive continually for their satisfaction; to act amiably toward all of their requests; to corroborate their arguments; to accept whatever they say; to embellish their opinions; to suppress your frustration toward their hateful acts; to not take credit for their good deeds; to proclaim their virtues far and wide; to conceal their vices; to befriend those whom they are close to even if they are distant to you; to distance yourself from those whom they dislike even if they are dear to you; to concern yourself with their affairs even when they themselves are not concerned; to preserve what they squander; to remember what they forget; to not burden them with your troubles while burdening yourself with each one of their troubles; and to be content with their failings while not being content with your own painful efforts. If you are loyal when they entrust you, cautious when they befriend you, faithful when they

place their confidence in you, humble when they forsake you, obliging when they enrage you, then you will teach them while appearing to learn from them, and you will cultivate them while seeming to be cultivated by them, all the while thanking them while not letting them thank you. Otherwise, get as far away from them as possible.

ON WHAT THE RULER OWES HIS SUBJECTS

The ruler must spread out a carpet of justice for his people, erect a tent of security, and fly the banners of forbearance with their fluttering tassels. He must pour out rivers of charity for them, restraining the hands of iniquity from reaching them, while showering them with the rain clouds of noble deeds. The most important of all the aforementioned qualities is justice.

ON WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT JUSTICE AND ITS BENEFIT, AND ON THE DESCRIPTION OF THE JUST RULER

Justice is required of anyone who is called upon to lead a people, whether he is a ruler or otherwise. God the Sublime said: "Surely, God enjoins justice and the doing of good" (Q 16:90); "If you judge, judge justly between them; indeed, God loves the just" (Q 5:42); "And when you speak, be just, even if it should be to a near kinsman" (Q 6:152); "David, behold, We have appointed you a viceroy in the earth; therefore judge between men justly, and follow not caprice" (Q 38:26). . . .

The Messenger of God said: "One hour of justice outweighs sixty years of worship." He also said: "You are all shepherds and you are all responsible for your flocks. The ruler is the shepherd of his people and he is responsible for them, and the man is the shepherd of his family and he is responsible for them. The woman is the shepherdess of her husband's house and children and she is responsible for them. And the slave is the shepherd of his master's property and is responsible for it. So, you are all shepherds and you are all responsible for your flocks."

The sages said: "A just ruler is better than a soaking rain, and a tyrannical ruler is better than prolonged discord and conflict (*fitna*)."

Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb said:^{*} "If the ruler is just, then he will be rewarded and you should be grateful. And if the ruler is unjust, then he will pay the price and you should be forbearing."

Sa'īd ibn Suwayd gave a public sermon in Homs, and after he praised God he said: "O people, Islam has an unassailable wall and a

sturdy gate. The wall of Islam is truth and its gate is justice. As long as the ruler is strong, Islam will remain unassailable; but the strength of the ruler lies not in the sword or the whip but in ruling on the basis of truth and justice.”

ON GOOD STATECRAFT AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE POLITY

Connected to this theme are the subjects of prudence and determination, seizing the opportunity and forbearance, forgiveness and punishment, and revenge.

It has been said that he who seeks power must reluctantly endure the ordeal of statecraft. And it has also been said: “When statecraft is sound, political authority is perfected.”

It is related that the news of a certain king’s statecraft once reached another king, so the latter wrote to the former saying: “You have achieved something in your statecraft that no other king of your age has achieved. Advise me of how you did this.” He replied: “I do not jest in matters of command and interdiction, nor promises and threats. I have relied upon the competent, and rewarded people on the basis of hard work and not personal inclination. I filled people’s hearts with a reverence for me uncontaminated by hatred, and with a love unadulterated by lies. I made sustenance publicly available to all, and forbade excess.”

As for what has been said about prudence, determination, and on seizing opportunities, one of the sages was asked: “What is prudence?” He replied: “It is to reflect on the consequences of things.”

The caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān said to his son al-W‘Alid: “My son, know that the difference between the sultan ruling his people and the people ruling the sultan is nothing but a matter of prudence versus neglectfulness. . . .” And ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib said: “Seize opportunities, for they pass like clouds.”

ON WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT FORBEARANCE*

Forbearance means responding to an evil deed with a good deed. It means to swallow one’s own rage, and shore up one’s reason. God Most High said: “Not equal are the good deed and the evil deed. Repel with that which is fairer and behold, he between whom and thee there is enmity shall be as if he were a loyal friend. Yet none shall receive it, except the steadfast; none shall receive it, except a man of mighty fortune.” (Q 41:34–35)

‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib said: “By indulging the impudent, your supporters against them will increase.” It has also been said: “The forbearing is not the one who is gentle when he is oppressed and vengeful when he is powerful, but rather the one who, having been oppressed, is merciful when he is powerful.”

It has been said that a person’s forbearance does not derive from [the circumstance] of one’s lack of supporters or of power. Rather, it is an essential human quality that emanates from a soul that is free of wickedness and harm, unblemished by weariness and vexation. It cannot be learned, nor acquired through introspection, as al-Mutanabbī said:

If forbearance is not present in one’s nature
Age will not make one more forbearing.

There are some, however, who say that forbearance is not a natural disposition but is acquired, and that the proud soul may be trained to accept it, being led to this acceptance out of a vain love for praise. They say: “Forbearance is acquired, just as knowledge is learned.”

Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī said: “Among the most honorable epithets that may be ascribed to a person is that he be called forbearing. That is because he will not be so called unless he is also reasonable, intelligent, patient, shrewd, forgiving, pardoning, tolerant, and unflappable. These are the most noble and honorable dispositions and qualities.”*

ON CONSULTATION, USING ONE’S REASON, AUTOCRACY, AND ON THE QUESTION OF WHOSE OPINION SHOULD BE RELIED UPON, AND STORIES OF THOSE WHO DID NOT LIKE ASKING FOR COUNSEL

God commanded His Prophet to consult his Companions—who were beneath him (in status)—when He said: “Take counsel with them in affairs, and when thou art resolved, put thy trust in God.” (Q 3:159) The exegetes claim that God Most High ordered His Prophet to consult his Companions not because of his need for their opinion, but rather so that he would learn of the blessing that is inherent in consultation. It has also been said that God ordered Muhammad to do so in order to create mutual affection and solidarity between them. And others say that He required this so that the practice of consultation would become customary among the Muslims.

It is related that the Messenger of God said: “He who seeks advice

will not regret doing so, and he who asks God for guidance will not fail." It has also been said: "Making an error on the basis of advice is more praiseworthy than achieving something successfully through autocracy."

The Greeks and the Persians would not assemble all of their ministers to advise them on a matter, but would rather consult a single adviser without letting the others know. They did this for several reasons. Among them was the desire to avoid competition between their advisers that would prevent the reasonable and sound study of the matter, for it is in the nature of those who are jointly engaged in an enterprise to compete with each other and to struggle with and attack one another. If, perhaps, one of them came up with some correct advice before everyone else, the others would envy him and would critique his opinion by shunning it and misinterpreting it and castigating it, thereby muddying his advice and corrupting it. Another reason [to consult one person rather than the group] was because groups allow secrets to slip out and become publicly known. This is why the Persians say: "One should assemble large groups for matters that require strength. As for obscure matters involving rational reflection, groups corrupt them and generate mutual rancor and competition."

There were some rulers who preferred to depend solely on their own opinions and hated to seek the advice of others. 'Abd al-Malik ibn Sālih said: "Everyone I've ever asked for advice became overweening and haughty toward me, making me feel servile. He became mighty as a result, and I became meek. Therefore, act autocratically! He who does so will appear glorious to the eye and frightful to the heart. Know that when you seek advice, your condition is dilapidated, and your pillars are quaking. No ruler ever became powerful who could not do without the minds of his ministers and the opinions of his advisers. So beware consultation, even when the paths before you are narrow and obscure."*

ON SAFEGUARDING SECRETS, GRANTING AUDIENCES, AND ON SECLUDING ONESELF

God Most High tells us that His prophet Jacob, son of Isaac, advised his son Joseph (upon hearing of his dream): "O my son, relate not thy vision to thy brothers, lest they devise against thee some guile." (Q 12:5) And the Messenger of God said: "Seek help, but in secrecy, to achieve your ends." And the sages said: "Your breast is wide enough to contain your secrets." They also said: "Your secrets are like your

blood,” meaning that spilling one’s secrets is like spilling one’s own blood.

‘Ali said: “Victory lies in resoluteness, and resoluteness lies in judiciousness, and judiciousness lies in protecting secrets.”

As for what has been said about granting and requesting audiences, God Most High said: “O believers, do not enter houses other than your houses until you first ask leave, and salute the people thereof; that is better for you; haply you will remember. And if you find not anyone therein, enter it not until leave is given to you. And if you are told, ‘Return,’ return; that is purer for you.” (Q 24:27–28) And He said: “O ye who believe! Let your slaves and those of you who have not come to puberty, ask leave of you at three times [before they come into your presence].” (Q 24:58)

The general Ziy‘ād ibn Abīhi asked his chamberlain ‘Ajlān: “On what basis do you grant audiences to people?” ‘Ajlān replied: “According to their clans, and then to their age, and then to their manners.” Ziy‘ād said: “And to whom do you prevent access?” ‘Ajlān replied: “To those with whom God is unconcerned.” Ziy‘ād said: “And who are they?” ‘Ajlān replied: “The ones who wear a winter cloak in the summer and a summer cloak in the winter.”

Sa‘īd ibn Utba used to sit off to the side whenever he would present himself at the door of one of the sultans. It was said to him, once: “You are very distant from the chamberlain,” and he replied: “Better to be summoned from afar than to be dismissed from up close.”

It has been said that there is nothing more ruinous to the kingdom and more damaging to the people than the excessive seclusion of the ruler. If the people have confidence in gaining access to the ruler, they will desist from oppressing one another. But if they are certain that they have no access to the ruler, they will take up oppressive acts.

This is contrary to what the aforementioned general, Ziy‘ād, said to his son: “Seclude yourself! For predators become more daring when they grow accustomed to seeing the shepherd.”

ON THE RULER’S MINISTERS AND COMPANIONS

God Almighty said (in the voice of Moses): “And give me a minister from among my family; Aaron, my brother. Confirm my strength with him, and let him share my task.” (Q 20:29–32)

The sages said: “The wisest king requires a minister, just as the bravest man requires a weapon. The finest horse requires the lash, and the sharpest blade requires a whetstone.” They also said: “The soundness of the world lies in the soundness of kings. And the soundness of kings lies in the soundness of their ministers. . . .”

As for the etymology of the word “minister” (*wazīr*), there has been some disagreement on this score, with three solutions proposed. One suggests that it is derived from the word for “burden” (*wizr*), for the minister carries the burdens of the ruler. The second derives it from “back” (*azr*), for the ruler is strengthened through his minister in the way that the back strengthens the body. The third etymology is from “refuge” (*wazar*), for the ruler may seek refuge in his minister and his assistance.

With regard to the qualities of the minister and what [traits] he must possess, the great judge al-Māwardī wrote in his book, *The Laws of the Office of Minister*, what amounts to the following: The minister occupies a position with opposing aspects; he rules over others while being ruled over by the king. Therefore he is both governor and governed. He takes charge of the management of his flock while submitting to the obedience of his ruler. So, he combines an authority to be obeyed with a compliant submission.

ON WRITING AND THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SCRIBES

Let us begin with the etymology of the term “writing” (*kitāba*), and why it was so called. Then we will discuss its noble nature and virtues, and the stories of those who were skilled in it, and what every scribe must know.*

The word “writing” (*kitāba*) is derived from *katb*, which means “gathering together” (*jam*). This is the sense in which a piece of writing was called a *kitāb*, for it gathers letters together just as a squadron (*katība*) gathers troops together.

As for its nobility, the Quran addressed this subject when God Most High said, in the first verses revealed to His Messenger in the cave of Hirā’, in the exalted month of Ramadān: “Recite: In the name of thy Lord who created, created Man of a blood clot. Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the Pen, taught Man that he knew not.” (Q 96:1–5) . . . And God Most High described the angels as “illustrious writers” (Q 82:11). . . .

As for the virtues of writing, among them is the writing down of the Noble Quran, which the people today hold between two book covers. Were it not for this, disagreements would have arisen [about its contents], and errors would have entered into it, and delusions would have befallen the hearts of men.

Also among its virtues is the recording of Prophetic tradition, upon which laws were established and the licit was distinguished from the illicit. Furthermore, [writing made possible] the copying of books of the sciences that were transmitted from Muslim scholars, and the

histories of those who have perished.

Arabic writing is the most noble of all forms of writing because the Quran is only written using it, unlike all of the other revealed books. It was invented in its Kufic style by the inhabitants of the city of ‘Anbar. Then, this script was taken to Mecca and people came to know of it. Some learned it, and then it became widespread, and people made frequent use of it. The script remained in this Kufic form until the days of the vizier Ibn Muqla, who clarified it incompletely, transforming it unsatisfactorily, and it remained so until ‘Alī ibn Hilāl al-Kātib emerged, who was known as Ibn al-Bawwāb. He completed its clarification and perfected its systematization. He developed its rules and unified it.

Writing, in the estimation of those who practice it professionally, has different forms: chancery secretaryship, financial secretaryship, legal secretaryship, the copying of manuscripts, and pedagogical writing. There are some who also count police secretaryship among these branches, but we have not included it for our book does not address the subject.

ON THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SCRIBE AND WHAT HE MUST KNOW

Ibrāhīm ibn Muhammad al-Shaybānī said: “A scribe should have an erect posture, a small head, a nether jawbone that does not overly protrude, a thick beard, a fine intuition, a graceful manner, a sweet character, subtle gestures, and elegant clothes.”

As for what the scribe must learn, Ibrāhīm al-Shaybānī said: “The first thing is a fine script, which is the hand’s tongue, the conscience’s adornment, the mind’s envoy, the intellect’s inspiration, the weapon of knowledge, the source of intimacy between separated brethren, their mode of banter across great distances, the keeper of secrets, and the register of affairs.”

It has been suggested that when God Most High said: “He multiplies in creation what He wills” (Q 35:1), He was referring to a fine script.

The scribes have differed over the matter of pointing the script.* Some deplored this practice, such as Sa‘īd ibn Humayd al-Kātib, who said: “I would rather a letter be mysterious to a reader than for a scribe to be disgraced by pointing it.”

Someone’s handwriting was once presented to ‘Abd Allāh ibn Tāhir, and he said: “How beautiful it would be, were it not for all the nigella seeds.”*

Muhammad ibn Abbād once looked over at Abū ‘Ubayd as he was

pointing the *basmala* and said: “If you knew it, you wouldn’t point it.”*

Others praised the pointing of script, saying: “Adorn those books by pointing them, and protect them from errors of copying!” [. . .] As the poet said:

It is as though the letters of one’s script were a tree
And the dots were the fruits in its branches

People have differed on the matter of the written versus the spoken word, some saying that the written word is superior to the spoken because the latter instructs the one who is present, while the written word instructs both the present and absent person.

Dhū l-Rumma said to ‘Īsā ibn ‘Umar: “Write down my poetry, for the book is more wondrous to me than the faculty of memory. The Bedouin who forgets a word that he has grown tired of trying to remember all day and night will put another word in its place with the same form but which nobody recites! However, the book never forgets anything and does not replace one word with another.”

ON THE GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIBE

Shihāb al-Dīn Mahmūd ibn Sulaymān al-Halabī wrote in his book *The Fine Means to the Art of Letter-Writing*: “The first thing that a scribe begins with is the memorization of the Book of God Most High. He must diligently recite it, studying it constantly and reflecting upon its meanings until it remains fixed in his thought and rolls off his tongue, is contained in his heart, and comes to mind whenever he needs to quote it in certain situations, bringing to bear upon them the decisive proofs that are found within it.”

Human beings have quoted the Quran on every subject that they have treated in their oratory and rhetoric, despite the fact that their own phrases cannot match the eloquence of the Quran, nor can a human being or jinn produce a single chapter the like of one of its own.

For example, someone once asked a scholar: “Where do you find, in God’s Book, [the idea contained in] the proverb: ‘Choose the neighbor before the house’?” He replied: “It is found in God’s statement: ‘God has struck a similitude for the believers’—the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, ‘My Lord, build for me a house in Paradise. . . .’ (Q 66:11) In so doing, she chose the neighbor [i.e., God] over the house,” and there are many other similar examples.

Following the Quran in importance is the memorization of a great

number of Prophetic traditions, particularly on the subject of the conduct of war and the ordinances of government. He must study their meanings and obscure terms and cultivated language. He should understand what is indispensable to know about their legal content, so as to adduce them by way of proof . . . for when a proof is based on an authoritative text (such as the Quran or a Prophetic tradition), it is accepted.

Following this, the scribe should read whatever he can find of books about grammar, through which he will attain the objective of knowledge of classical Arabic. For even if the scribe achieves the most complete degree of eloquence in Arabic, if he produces a solecism, then all of the virtues he has attained will flee and the entire foundation of his speech will crumble.

Following this, he should read what is available to him in the way of lexicographical textbooks, such as *The Eloquent (al-Fasīh)* and *The Essential Resource for the Studious (Kifāyat al-Mutahaffiz)* and other such collections of terms so that his means of expression are widened, and the gate of description is opened to him when he is in need of describing or depicting something.

Connected to this subject is the memorization of the sermons, speeches, dialogues, disputations, and letters of the most eloquent Companions of the Prophet, as well as others. The scribe must note what these orators demanded for themselves or their people, and what their opponents criticized them for, as these matters lead to an understanding of historical incidents from different perspectives, and to appraise current events in light of [the historical circumstances] that resemble them. It also does well to emulate the manner of those who conquered their enemies, and to follow the path of those who were compelled to ask for forgiveness. This study also teaches one about how to renounce a demand and to reaffirm it, and about decisive and irrefutable responses. Consider these in their contexts and you will find them indispensable.

Then consider the battle days and wars of the Arabs, and the names of the days that became proverbial for them . . . and the poetry that was recited and the contests that took place between [the different tribes] on those days. They contain knowledge of things that may be occasionally cited, such as an ancient battle or a famous day or a certain warrior. . . . If the practitioner of this craft does not know the battle days of the Arabs and the events that took place upon them, he will not know how to respond when he is faced with something along these lines, or what to say when he is asked about them. This will be considered a shortcoming in his craft.

Then let him look into the histories of the different nations for what they contain of the stories of the kings and their methods of rule, and

the accounts of their assaults and stratagems in their wars, and all the trials that they faced. The scribe might be required to answer a question about some historical figure, or he may encounter some mention of a specific event in a book, or he may face an argument that draws upon some antique expression, and he will not be able to differentiate its literal and figurative aspects. In the historical portion of this book, we have set forth all the scribe needs to know on this subject.

Then let him memorize the poetry of the Arabs and study the literary commentaries, clarifying the poetry's ambiguities and benefiting from what the scholars have selected in the form of anthologies such as the *Hamāsa*, the *Mufaddaliyyāt*, the *Asma'iyyāt*, the *Dīwān al-Hudhaliyyīn*, and other similar works, because of the copious materials they contain, their suitability for quotation, the fundamentals of the lexicon that they survey, and the rarities of the Arabic language.* The earliest generations of Muslims used to concern themselves greatly with this subject, and it is said that the imam al-Shāfi'ī memorized the Hudhayl's tribal anthology. If the aspiring scribe memorizes a lot of this poetry and studies its meanings, it will become easy for him to understand it and straightforwardly apparent to him where he should cite it. His words will steer him to display the poetry he has stored in the treasury of his memory, citing a verse in the ideal spot, and placing it in a new context—as a probative or felicitous quotation—as though it were made for it.

He should also memorize a good portion of the work of the modern poets (*al-muhdathūn*), such as Abū Tammām, al-Buhturī, Ibn al-Rūmī, and al-Mutanabbī, due to the elegance of their style, the intricate artifice that revolves through their words, the subtle elaboration of tropes in their poems, and the similarity of their language to that of the orators and the scribes.*

Then let him study the epistles of our forefathers but without memorizing them, so that his mind does not rely solely upon that which is found in their repository, and that his thought does not rest entirely upon the contents of their depots, benefiting from what does not belong to him, dressing himself in that which was not granted to him like one “dressed in the two garments of falsehood.”* However, for he who intends to quote this material in polite company rather than in chancery writing, then it is best to memorize and imitate it.

Let him then consider the books of ancient Arab proverbs—in poetry and prose—such as the works of al-Maydānī and al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī and Hamza al-Isbahānī and others. He should also study the proverbs found in the poetry of the modernists, such as Abū l-'Atāhiya, Abū Tammām, and al-Mutanabbī.*

He should also study the ordinances of governance, and we have

presented a good portion of that subject in this book.

These are the general matters that the aspirant to this craft cannot but apply himself diligently to their study. If he does not do so, let him know that he will find himself in one valley, while the craft of secretaryship will be in another.

ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL SECRETARYSHIP

At the beginning of this chapter, we discussed the etymology of the term *kitāba* (writing or secretaryship), and the reasons it was called by this name. We also discussed its origin, prestige, and benefits, so there is not need to repeat any of this here. Let us now discuss that which relates to administrative, commercial, and financial secretaryship. We previously discussed the chancery clerks, their importance and prestige, nobility and eminence, eloquence and gracefulness, righteousness and munificence and many other praiseworthy attributes. Well, the financial clerks are even more precise and more involved in the organization of funds, and more cogent in their proofs, and clearer in their explanations.

God Most High said in His Book: “. . . that you may know the number of the years, and the *accounting*, and everything We have distinguished very distinctly.” (Q 17:12)* One of the interpreters of the Quran suggested that when God reported what Joseph said—“Set me over the storehouses of the land; I am a *knowing guardian*” (Q 12:55)—what God meant was “a financial clerk” (*kātib hāsib*).*

Al-Bukhārī reported the following Prophetic tradition on the authority of Abū Humayd al-Sā’idī: “The Messenger of God employed a man named Ibn al-Lutbiyya from the Asa’d tribe to collect the alms of the S’Alīm clan. When he arrived (with the alms), Muhammad held him to account (*hāsabahu*).” This demonstrates that the Messenger of God was himself an accountant.*

Thanks to the financial clerks, money is preserved and profits are calculated, the laws of countries are fixed, and new possessions are distinguished from inherited ones. The chancery clerks cannot boast of a virtue without [the financial clerks] boasting of many virtues. For every high rank they ascend to, the others ascend to multiple ranks. For every epistle they distinguish themselves with, the others supersede them in that as well. For every official secret they keep, the others keep one as well, . . . Furthermore, the financial clerks have been given duties that the chancery clerks have been prevented from undertaking, and their pens have written on issues that the others’ have been forbidden from writing on. . . . We do not measure them against each other by way of competition or exaggeration or boasting,

but every group has a virtue that cannot be denied.

When I arrived, in this book of mine, to the chapter on secretaryship, I wanted to pass over the issue of financial secretaryship and limit myself to the discussion of the chancery, in the custom of those who had written on this subject. But a friend asked me to include a useful summary here from which the administrator might learn the practice of administration, and be guided by it in matters of taxes and inventories which he must file himself or request to be filed. So I presented this small sampling by way of responding to his request and fulfilling his hopes. My discussion of the craft of secretaryship is only a drop in the ocean, a tiny bead on the necklace of its pearls. The novice must thoroughly comprehend this knowledge and linger upon it.

When I wrote what I did about this craft, I had yet to come across a single book or page on this subject. Nor had I glimpsed a sign of it or heard anyone sum it up in a single expression. Not a word had been uttered about it, nor had anyone loosened the reins of his eloquence to gallop upon its racecourses. I had no such thing to use as a model, no loom to weave upon, no path to follow, no example to emulate. Indeed, I found the door to this subject locked, its curtain lowered. Every scribe had formerly depended upon his own knowledge, and the reckoning of his own intellect. So I reconsidered my plan and felt inclined toward it after having previously retreated from it. I knocked at the door, and it opened after having been locked. I lifted its curtain, and it came unstitched after having been sewn tight. I mounted its horse, and it was gentle after having been refractory. I ascended its summit, and the path to success became clear to me.

So I proceeded at that point to compose and assemble what I have now written. I began by addressing the etymology of the term *dīwān* (scribal bureau) and the reason it was so called. I then discussed the different scribal offices, the first Islamic scribal bureau to be established, and the reason for its establishment. Then I discuss what every fiscal manager needs to know in terms of the procedures and formulas of management, its conventional practices and principles, the reports that every manager must prepare himself and have others prepare for him, and the formulas of accounting, as you shall find below.

ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE TERM *DĪWĀN* (SCRIBAL BUREAU),
THE REASON IT WAS SO CALLED, AND THE PERSON WHO
NAMED IT SUCH

There are two theories about the origin of the word *diwān* (scribal bureau). One says that Chosroes looked in on his scribes one day and saw that they were gathered together, calculating numbers. So he said, "*Dīvāneh*," which means "crazy," and the place they were sitting came to be called by that name.

The second theory is that the word *divān* in Persian means "devils," and the scribes were so called because of their great cleverness, their inquiry into matters clear and obscure, their consensus on topics that elude and divide others, and their acquaintance with things that are near and far. Eventually, the place where they gathered was named after them, and called *diwān*. According to al-Māwardī's *Ordinances of Governance*, this is what has been said about the origins of the name, and God knows best.

This form of secretaryship has several divisions and offices, roots, and branches, and they include the stewardship of the army, the sultan's treasury, the public treasury, the granaries, the sultan's private properties; collecting taxes from commercial enterprises [such as bakeries and bathhouses], administering the poll tax on non-Muslims and collecting land taxes; overseeing the sugar plantations, presses, and refineries.

The overseer of each of these offices requires the knowledge of certain principles that we will set forth below. Let us begin with the stewardship of the army.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES WITH WHICH THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY MUST BE FAMILIAR DURING OUR DAY

The secretary of the army must list the names of all the military commanders of different ranks who are paid with land grants, currency, or weighed fungible commodities. He should also list the sultan's mamluks, the non-mamluk cavalymen, and the Turcoman and Bedouin Arab chieftains. He must arrange these names alphabetically in a ledger, and record beside each name the year when his prefecture or military service began, and who held his land grant prior to him. The secretary should also indicate, beside each name, the fiscal value of the land grant by using a symbol rather than a plain number, and he should state the name of each soldier's commanding officer. In the case of the Turcoman and Bedouin tribesmen, he should list how many horses and camels they presented to the royal stables. With regard to the Egyptian Bedouins, he should list what they are stipulated to provide to the sultan in exchange for their land grants,

such as gifts, food for the postal horses, produce, and so on and so forth.

The secretary of the army must review all of his ledgers so that he does not need to look at them, having and so that he has memorized the names of the soldiers and the locations of their land grants. He may find himself before the ruler or his representative when he is asked about something related to this topic. If he delays in his response to look up the answer, this may be perceived as a weakness. Therefore, it is necessary to have the true state of affairs memorized so that he may swiftly respond to such a question, and that will only come by reviewing his accounts and constantly studying them. The one who does this will be the most indispensable of all managers, for he will be the one to whom questions are directed in the majority of situations.

The military scribe should avoid writing down any specific quantity of troops, for it is incumbent upon him to conceal this figure. If he were to set it down with his pen, it would not be safe from someone's glances and would then circulate and spread. It may then reach the enemy, the rebel, or insurgent, and all kinds of corruption will ensue. This is a matter that the military scribe should pay attention to and take great pains to avoid, and he must guard this information from all others. If necessity requires him to make a note of the figure in fear that the commander in chief might ask him about it, he should write it down using a secret password that nobody else knows except for himself (and anyone else who has experience with the managing of military affairs).

ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SULTAN'S TREASURY

Integrity and trustworthiness are the mainstays of this position, for the treasuries of kings in our age cannot be fully inventoried due to their size, abundant contents, and the immensity of their treasures. Were a scribe commissioned to prepare an account of the financial revenues of the sultan's treasury for a single year, he would have to be appointed solely to this task for the year, in its entirety, without working on anything else. By the time the account was complete (at the end of the second year) and corrected by the secretary of the treasury (during the third year), its anticipated benefit would have long passed. Furthermore, the secretary of the treasury would have neglected the receipts of the third year, having been occupied with the first year's bookkeeping.

Having established the inability of the scribe to prepare such an account, it is obvious that the mainstays of the management of the

sultan's treasury are trustworthiness and integrity. However, there are a few additional things that the scribe is in need of:

He must register all the loads of goods and valuable merchandise that he receives, and compare their contents with their accompanying descriptions.* He should note down the weights, lengths, and quantities of the goods, no matter what their type or description, and organize them by the region, port, province, or kingdom (from which they arrived). He must indicate all the gifts and offerings received, arranging them by type. In the same way, he must keep an account of all the goods that were sold, when necessity called.

He should also be aware of the customary gifts from the holders of administrative positions, and what they spent during their tenures and in the course of the management of their offices, on occasions that required a gift and at other times.

He must also register all of the gifts that arrive at the sultan's treasury from kings and viceroys, comparing them with what had been sent previously, and making note of any increase or decrease of value. He must have all of this information in the back of his mind so that he can produce it if asked by his superior; and if he does not, he should not contrive it. The scribe must register the gift-giving habits of the kings and what had been sent to them in previous years. He should also note what they themselves had sent in the way of gifts, and what types of honors and gifts their envoys were in the habit of giving and receiving.

The scribe should keep an account of all the fabrics sent to the treasury from the Dār al-A'māl and the usual pattern of shipments from it, such that he can inquire about a delayed consignment. If the stocks of a certain type of fabric fall short, he may quickly expose the vizier or manager responsible for that principality so that he may be stripped of his charge, for it is the responsibility of that official to get hold of that stock from its usual place and transport it to the sultan's treasury.

With regard to the sultan's personal clothing and his preferences for the cut of a garment, its length, and its width, this is a matter connected with the head of the wardrobe masters, their senior official. It is his job to come to the sultan's treasury and select those fabrics that he knows will befit the sultan and will suit his purpose. He will then cut the fabric into the shape of a certain garment, and it is the job of the master tailor to concern himself with its length, width, and symmetry. The secretary, however, cannot be oblivious to these matters, nor can he be ignorant of the quality of all the different commodities used, and the techniques of garment cutting, mending, embroidering, and stuffing, so that he can assist every craftsman with his eyes and his tongue. Let him not be a mere follower of their

preferences, but rather participate in what they are themselves working on. It is their responsibility to catch any mistakes that he might make, for these crafts are over and above his principal occupation.

Any man who possesses all of these qualities should be appointed to the management of the sultan's treasury.

ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SULTAN'S PROPERTIES

These include the sultan's larder, the sultan's buttery, the sultan's bathhouse, the sultan's vestiary, the sultan's furniture storehouse, and the sultan's arsenal. The properties are overseen by the Master of the House (*ustādh al-dār*).

The Sultan's Larder

The administrator of the sultan's larder needs to know several things. Among them is what is necessary to prepare the general banquet as well as the *tāri'* banquet, which is the second meal that is served after the sultan departs the General Assembly. The elite companions of the sultan eat the meal along with any of his guests, and this is a more elite meal than the first. The administrator also prepares the *tāri' al-tāri'*, which is the third meal, served after the second is removed and reserved for the sultan and his closest companions. The administrator must keep an account of all that is needed for the meals, including meats, seasonings, vegetables, spices, sweets, and nuts, as well as perfume, incense, fire logs, and other things. In that way he will have a budget in advance, and will not go beyond it. If he does go beyond it for some exceptional reason that is not apparent, it will be his own responsibility.

He must also know all the protocols concerning the banquets for special occasions and holidays so that they will proceed as usual, with no changes unless under special decree.

His duties include inspecting the contents of the larder, pointing out any dwindling stocks, before they are completely depleted, and in enough time for them to be replenished. For if the request for their replenishment is delayed until they have run out completely—or if the request is issued at a point at which there does not remain enough stock to last until the fresh commodity arrives from a different country—the secretary will be held responsible for his own neglect.

He must also compose a ledger of the names of all those who supply the sultan's larder—such as butchers, breeders, fowlers, and others—and keep track of everything that each one of them brings every day.

In that way, if it becomes clear that something needs to be accounted for, he will be able to abstract from his records an account that includes each item and its cost.

He should keep track of which of the sultan's mamluks have taken ill and stopped eating meat, instead having only dishes of boiled vegetables. In that case, his salary should not be charged for the cost of meat during the period of his illness, nor for the seasonings.

The Sultan's Buttery

This property contains all kinds of beverages, sugar drinks, theriacs, medicinal powders, pastes, pastilles, raisin drinks (*aqsimā*), near beer (*fuqqā'*), dates, herbs, sweets, electuaries, fruits, and other similar things.* The administrator of this office must keep a record of everything he receives in the way of the aforementioned goods, and everything that is used in the preparation of beverages and sweets. . . . He should have knowledge of the traditions of the banquets and the sultan's meals that are scheduled for each day, and he should carry them out according to custom and any particular requests that the sultan may have according to the occasion. He should also be aware of what is spent on the sultan's mamluks who are ill, in the way of medicinal beverages and pastes, as prescribed by the physicians.

The Sultan's Vestiary

This property contains the implements for washing and ablutions, the sultan's white clothes that absolutely must be washed, and the tools of the bathhouse and the furnaces. Many different types of implements are found in the vestiary, including: washbasins; pitchers; kettles; bowls; bathhouse chairs, curtains, and felt rugs; prayer carpets; cushions; towels; kerchiefs; seats upholstered in broadcloth; large sprawling carpets; and other things. There are also incense burners and all kinds of incense, perfume, Galia Moscata, rosewater, musk-scented fragrances, and other types of things that suit this property, which are to be requested from the sultan's larder and treasury.

The Sultan's Furniture Storehouse

This property contains various types of furniture, tents, pavilions, bedsteads, wooden structures erected within the royal tents,* wooden bathhouses that are brought along on voyages, and other similar things such as saddle blankets and mattresses. This is a vast property containing many things of great value, which must be carefully and knowledgeably accounted for. The administrator of this property must know what pieces of furniture are to escort the sultan on his voyages,

to be used by his coterie and mamluks of all ranks and offices. He must know what furniture must be assembled for the sultan's abodes, and which servants should accompany them, and what must be erected for the sultan's properties and storehouses, and what must be set up in the way of accommodations for the administrative officials accompanying the sultan's convoy, as well as others, including even the sultan's dogs, the dog-keepers, and the slave girls. He must distinguish between the tents for hunting, pleasure outings, voyages, wars, and other types of travel that require encampments. He must inspect the furniture before consigning it to the servants charged with handling it—making note of its condition before it travels—and he must repeat this inspection upon receiving it again, and do the same with the pieces that he loans to the administrative officials. He must also keep an account of all the raw materials given to the artisans, including white and dyed fabric, spun thread, leather, oilcloth, wool, and timber.

The Sultan's Arsenal

This is among the grandest and most important properties, which is overseen by the chief armorer. Its administrator must safeguard everything that enters it and keep an account of each kind of weapon that is taken from it by the chief armorer's unit of royal Mamluks, the guards of the arsenal, and other units, when the sultan rides out in public or attends the general assembly. He is responsible for retrieving, loaning out, and preparing all the weaponry that the sultan has granted permission to be used. He must also receive all the weaponry that arrives at the arsenal from other weapon storehouses, the swords of officers who have been imprisoned, the weapons of those who have died, and so on. He must distinguish all of these pieces from the other holdings, and also inform the chief armorer of any pieces that are vulnerable to damage because of neglect, so that they may be taken out and refurbished by being cleaned, painted, polished, burnished, sharpened, straightened, stitched, or whatever might be needed.

Everything we have presented above in connection with the administration of the sultan's properties has nothing to do with the intellectual side of secretaryship, but rather its practical side.

ON LEGAL SECRETARYSHIP

The legal secretary must be honest, pious, faithful, eloquent, well-spoken, and have good penmanship. He must also have a knowledge

of those sciences and fundamentals that will aid him in this craft and which are absolutely indispensable. This means that he must be knowledgeable about the Arabic language and jurisprudence, a master of the science of accounting, steeped in matters of inheritance, well trained in keeping legal records, and informed about the content of the legal documents that he pens (in all of their variety). He must have perfected the copyist's trade and its principles, having learned what to write with regard to every possible event [that requires a document], including: all manner of debts, assignments of debt, joint partnerships, fungible and non-fungible loans, gifts and dowries, voluntary alms and revocation, transfers of ownership, sales, returns due to blemishes, annulled contracts, preemption, forward buying, rescinded sales, reciprocal property sharing, all manner of hiring contracts, sharecropping, contracts concerning surety-bonds, emancipation of slaves (during the master's lifetime or following their death), conditional enfranchisement, marriage law and all that relates to it, divorce, conditional divorce, annulled marriages, and many other things.

Some Examples of Legal Documents

Joint partnership—A partnership may be formed on the basis of gold or silver. Once two people have agreed to form a partnership—each having taken some of their own assets and combined them together—and decided to draw up a written agreement, the scribe should write something along the following lines:

“The two parties have soundly and duly acknowledged before their witnesses that they have entered into partnership with each other while fearing God Most High and seeking to obey Him, acting in good faith toward one another and treating one another in such a manner pleasing to God. They have each extracted (some quantity) from their assets and merged them together to form a single entity, the parts of which are no longer distinct, and whose totality amounts to (some quantity). Both individuals acknowledge that they have access to this joint asset and they may use it to purchase whatever type of commodity or ware they choose in such-and-such a place or city, and they will each remain with it in a shop in such-and-such a land, if that is the nature of their agreement.”

Examples of Rental Agreements

If a group of people rent some land from someone in order to build on it or for some other purpose, the scribe should write something along the following lines. “The individuals ____ (insert names) hereby rent from ____ * (insert name) the entirety of this plot of arable land which

belongs to the landlord, and it is to be found in ____ (insert place), with an area of ____ (insert area), measurements of ____ (insert dimensions), in order to build whatever they wish upon it, and to dig whatever they wish—from water wells to conduits, canals, and streams—and to erect whatever they wish, and to cultivate and plant whatever they wish, benefiting from it in any legal manner they choose, for a period of thirty years beginning with ____ (date).”

If a man would like to rent out his slave or his son, the scribe should write: “John Doe rents out his adolescent son ____ (name) who is under his care and supervision, to ____ (name of renter) such that he may work for him doing ____ (name of trade) in his shop in ____ (name of place), for ____ (period of time), for a rental sum that amounts to ____ (daily wage).” And if he wishes to rent himself out, the scribe should write: “John Doe rents himself out to ____ (name of renter) to work for him doing ____ (name of trade).”

If a divorced woman would like to rent herself out to her former husband, the scribe should write: “Jane Doe rents herself out to her former husband . . . to raise and nurse her children by him, washing their clothes, combing their hair, and taking care of them in her home, which is in ____ (name of place), for ____ (specific period of time).”

Examples of Marriage Contracts

If a man who is mute (and deaf)* marries a woman who can speak, the contract should read: “Here is the bridal dowry that ____ (insert name), the mute and deaf man, has presented to ____ (insert name), his proposed wife, being of sound mind and aware what is legally required of him, communicating through gestures that are understandable by his witnesses, and impossible to deny by anyone who observes him. . . .” Upon agreement, the contract should conclude: “The husband indicated his assent to this contract through understandable gestures.”

And if both husband and wife are mute and deaf, the contract should read: “Here is the bridal dowry that ____ (insert name) has presented to ____ (insert name), each of them being mute and deaf, sound of mind and vision, aware of his or her legal responsibilities, having made that clear through gestures which the witnesses of this contract understand, . . .”

If the husband is a eunuch, the end of the contract should read: “The wife knows that her husband is a eunuch who is not capable of sexual intercourse, and she consents to him.”

As for he who copies works of the sciences, such as jurisprudence, philology, the principles of jurisprudence and other things, it is most fitting and suitable for him not to begin writing anything until he has surveyed the subject, reading and familiarizing himself with it. This is so that he may be free from errors, copying mistakes, and substitutions, and so that he may know where to move from one chapter to another, from a question to an answer, from one section to another, from a fundamental principle to a derivative principle or vice versa, from an exception to an illustration or a digression that is unrelated to an important principle, or to the speech of a speaker, or the question of a questioner, or the objection of an objector, or the critique of a critic.

The copyist must know what he is saying and where he is heading, separating each quote with a dividing mark that indicates its completion, and highlighting the statement of someone other than himself with a mark indicating its significance. If he does not do this, he will be like a wood-gatherer at night, not knowing when the morning will suddenly dawn on him, or the sailor in a storm who cannot tell the difference between morning and evening.

As for copying historical works, one must know the names of the kings, their sobriquets, personal names, and patronymics, especially the kings of the Persians, Turks, Khwārizmīs, and Tatars, for most of their names are foreign and cannot be ascertained except through oral transmission. The copyist, when he writes these names, must specify them by using diacritics, markings, and notes that indicate [their correct pronunciation]. The same goes for names of cities, towns, villages, fortresses, rural areas, districts, provinces, and climes. He must indicate such instances in which the spelling [of two place names] is the same but the pronunciation is different, or instances where the spelling and pronunciation are the same but the referent is different, as in the case of Marw and Marw. The first one is Marw al-Rūdh and the other is Marw al-Shāhijān. Or, for example, al-Qāhira and al-Qāhira. The first is al-Qāhira al-Mu'izziyya [Cairo], and the second is the fortress al-Qāhira, which was built in Zawzan by Mu'ayyad al-Malik, the ruler of Karmān. If the copyist refers to al-Qāhira without distinguishing it by its place and full title, the mind of the listener will rush to al-Qāhira al-Mu'izziyya because of its unsurpassed fame.

And as for the names of men, such as 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziy'ād and 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziy'ād, the first of them is 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziy'ād ibn Abihi, [whose father] Ziy'ād was the son of Sumayya, and whom Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān appointed after his father. . . . This 'Ubayd Allāh was governor of Iraq after his father until the days of Marwān ibn al-Hakam, while the second was 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziy'ād ibn

Zabyān. Their story is similar to one of those circular arguments in logic, as ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziy‘ād ibn Abīhi was killed by al-Mukhtār ibn Abī ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafī, who was killed by Mus‘ab ibn al-Zubayr, who was killed by ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziy‘ād ibn Zabyān. If each of these two individuals is not distinguished by his grandfather and his lineage, the matter would remain confusing for the listener, insofar as he does not have knowledge of the facts or a grasp of the historical reports. The copyist is responsible for clarifying such matters, and the same goes for the names of the battle days of the Arabs, and other things as well. He must point out all of this, using the appropriate indications.

As for he who copies poetry, he cannot make do without the knowledge of its meters, for that will help him to copy it faithfully according to the original, as it was first copied. He must be knowledgeable about the Arabic language and about prosody so that he can determine the meter of a verse when its scansion is problematic. Thereby he may learn whether the poem is in its original form and order, or whether it contains a change in meter due to omissions or additions. After correcting it, he should recognize the correction and mark it in its place, for its alteration changes the meaning and corrupts it, diverting it from the intended meaning.

If the copyist masters these skills, correctly applies these principles, clarifies these names, traces these lineages, he will have achieved the desired objective of his learning and secretarship. At that point, let him deploy his pen widely in copying scholarly texts, setting down prose and poetry.

ON PEDAGOGICAL SECRETARYSHIP

This may be divided into two areas: beginning instruction and advanced instruction. With regard to beginning instruction, this consists of what young boys learn during their early years. The teacher begins his instruction of the young boy by teaching him how to write the letters of the alphabet. Once the boy has learned the letters and how to write them, and can distinguish between the pointed and unpointed ones, the teacher examines him on the letters in a random order. For example, he may ask him about the *nūn*, then the *jīm*, then the *dād*, and so on. If the boy responds correctly to these mixed-up letters, the teacher will know that he has mastered them.

Then the teacher will make the boy form syllables out of the letters, pronouncing each of them with the vowels -a, -i, -u, and with no vowel at all. Once he has learned how to pronounce them and the teacher has tested him in the same manner as before, he will show

him how to join all of the letters together in their written form, from the *bā'* to the *jīm*, *dāl*, *rā'*, *sīn*, *sād*, *tā'*, *'ayn*, *fā'*, *kāf*, *lām*, and *mīm*.^{*} He will begin with the *bā'* and *alif*, and then continue through all of the ones that follow.

Then the teacher makes the student write "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate," and proceeds gradually to teach him how to write, training him in how to deduce the spelling of a word, and how to combine letters into words. They continue until the student's tongue and hand are strengthened through this training, and he can read what is written for him, and write what is spoken to him without any assistance.

This is what is called beginning instruction, and only those who are known for their piousness, strong faith, and their pursuit of the path of Prophetic tradition need apply themselves to it. Anyone who contradicts this description, or has been defamed for one reason or another, must be prevented from such instruction by the authorities.

As for advanced instruction, this has to do with the proficiency of penmanship, which is the basis of everything we discussed earlier with regard to scribal documents. Whoever applies himself to it must master the different scripts and learn the rules set forth by the vizier Ibn Muqla (when he Arabized the writing and transformed it from Kufic into its new form) and developed further by Ibn al-Bawwāb, and he must have a knowledge of the five principal hands: the Exact Hand (*al-Muhaqqaq*), the Copying Hand (*al-Naskh*), the Messages Hand (*al-Riq'ā*), the Decree Hand (*al-Taw'āqī*), and the One-Third Hand (*al-Thuluth*). These five hands are the principal ones, from which derive still other hands.

There have been various reasons and etymologies proposed for the names of these hands. It is said that the Exact Hand was so called because it is the basis of penmanship and requires exactness in the creation and composition of the letters. The Copying Hand was so called because books are copied in it. It was in fact developed for this purpose, and books may not be finely written in any other script, due to the straightness of its lines, the fineness of its letters, and the harmony of its parts. The Messages Hand was so called because of its use in composing messages for common purposes. Do you not see how much beauty there is in messages composed in this script? Were they written in any other script, they would not be esteemed by people's hearts. The Decree Hand was so called because it was created to compose decrees issued by caliphs and kings. And the One-Third Hand was so named because it is used for the composition of those edicts that are written on paper that has been cut to one-third [of the size] format. This is what has been said on the reasons for the names of these hands.^{*}

THE THIRD BOOK

ON THE MUTE BEASTS

I have gathered in this book—may God strengthen you—all kinds of animals, from the winged to the fang-baring, the skittish to the flying, the hunting and springing, the braying and neighing, the burdened and milked, the pricking and stinging, the retiring and appearing, the staying and straying. From the lion, peerless in his majesty, above all others of his species. All beasts avoid him wherever he walks, and scramble from his vicinity in whichever direction he sets forth. He opens his mouth to bear his knives, and stretches out his paws to cut short lives. Here, too, is the tiger, iron-toothed and adorned of hide; the panther, quick to leap and ravish; the dog, who guides nighttime guests when the stars are extinguished; and the hyena, who, upon spotting a carcass, circles it and draws ever closer; and the wolf, who attacks his companion if he spots blood upon him. And other kinds of wild beasts, such as antelopes, horses, mules, and cattle; poisonous creatures both deadly and harmless; classes of birds that sometimes attack their prey in midair or snatch a beast out of the desert dust; and birds that resemble the scavengers and herbivorous of other classes; and those highly prized birds that are caged because of their beautiful voices; and those that coo and warble and imitate speech.

I have distinguished every animal by its virtues and vices, and were it not for fear of prolixity I would have described every animal with an entire epistle. However, I have contented myself with transmitted material, at the expense of my own writings. I know that I fall short of this rank and so have refrained. Others have preceded me who have achieved much in this domain, and spoken profusely and at great length, gathering all the main ideas together and not leaving a path for anyone else. Therefore, I have made my comments brief and limited myself to this small and fanciful sampling, organizing it into the finest arrangement, and classifying it into the most harmonious sections and chapters.

Carnivorous Animals

THE LION

Let us begin with the names of the lion, then recount what has been said about the types of lions, their species, their styles of hunting, their boldness and cowardice, and how the lion has been described in prose and poetry.

With regard to the names of the lion, there has been much said on this subject. Some have counted up to one thousand names for the lion, but we have limited ourselves to the most famous ones.

Among its agnomens are Abū al-Ashbāl and Abū al-Hārith; its proper names include Bayhas, Usāma, Harthama, and Kahmas. Its epithets include: the Calamitous, the Strong-Chested, the Unbending Sword, the Ill-Tempered, the Conqueror, Whose Effrontery Increases After Dark, Whose Bite is Ruinous, the Cause for Worry, Who Stalks the Herd, the Coarse, The Lion from Whom All Other Lions Flee, the Wolf, the Rapacious, the Mangler, Whose Food Has Bones in It, the Mutilator, the Limper, the Fatty, the Huge and Ponderous.* And the lioness that is visibly pregnant is called al-Khunābish.

As for the classes and species of lions, there are two kinds that people are familiar with, the first being round of shape and the second being elongated and hirsute. Aristotle recounted many types of this animal, reporting on the authority of one who had discussed the natures of animals before him that in India, there was a kind of beast—he named it in Greek—with the size and countenance of a lion except for its face, which looks like a human being’s face.* Its color is an intense red and its tail is like that of a scorpion, with a stinger at the end of it. Its voice sounds like a loud horn and it eats people.

As for the lion’s customs in gestating, delivering, and nursing its young, the author of *Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts* (Jamāl al-Dīn al-Watwāt) said: “According to those who have discussed the nature of animals, the lioness only brings forth one cub at a time, and delivers it as a piece of flesh that cannot sense or move. She then watches over it without nursing it for three days, and then the father arrives and blows into that piece of flesh several times until it begins to breathe and its limbs separate from each other, and it

takes shape. Then its mother comes to it and nurses it, and the cub does not open its eyes until seven days after it is born. As long as the lioness is nursing, the male lion will not approach her. After six months, the cub learns to fend for itself, and the male lion then throws himself upon the female. If she is in heat, she will avail herself to him, but if she is not, she will repel him. The lioness remains with her cub for a year and a half, and then she rejoins the male and allows him to mate with her. And God knows best.”

As for its manner of leaping and pouncing, its forbearance, its quickness of walking and eating, the lion possesses what no other beast does in terms of the distance of its leap, its tight grip on the ground, its speed when fleeing, its ability to tolerate hunger, and its limited need for water. They say that the lion may travel in search of food for thirty *farsakhs* (about 105 miles), and he will not eat the fallen prey of other beasts. When he is satiated by his own prey, he leaves it and will not return to it even if he suffers from hunger. After he eats, he will go for two days and nights without food because of the extent of his satiety, and then will eat something dry like the dung of a dog. When he urinates, he lifts one of his legs up like a dog. When he is deprived of food, he becomes angry; when he is satiated, he is meek. A rotting carcass is more pleasing to him than fresh meat, and he will not hunt human beings out of enmity but for food. If he passes a human being while satiated, he will not attack him. He bites with his front teeth, does not chew, and is known for his foul breath. The flesh of the dog is his most favored of all meats, and it is said that this is because of his rancor toward the dog. When he tries to patrol the peripheries of villages, the dog incessantly barks and warns of his presence. The people wake up and guard against the lion, so he has to retreat in failure. If he wants to succeed, he begins by killing the dog in order to be free of his warnings. And if he has eaten a great deal of meat and drunk a lot of blood—thereby sweetening his constitution—it is part of his nature to seek out salt, even if it is found fifty miles away from his den.

As for the boldness and cowardice of the lion—its boldness is very well known and undeniable. It will approach a large group of people without any fear or worry. I saw this with my own eyes one night in Shawwāl 702 (May 1303 CE) when I was riding from Baysān al-Ghawr to Qarāwā.* I was with about twenty-five horsemen and a group of men carrying bows and quivers. It was a moonlit night, and a lion joined us as we were walking. He kept pace with us along the right side of the road; he was not far at all, in fact closer than a stone’s throw away, and he stayed that way for a quarter of the night. Then, when he despaired of catching any one of us, due to our vigilance, he lagged behind us and then left us in a different direction.

As for the cowardice of the lion—he is frightened by the voice of the rooster, the beating of a metal basin, and the playing of a lute. He is frightened by the sight of a black rope, a white rooster, a cat, and a mouse. They say that a lion does not befriend any other wild beast, because he does not consider any his equal. He will not come close to a menstruating woman, and if he touches a pine tree with his legs, he goes numb and is not able to move. If he is covered in water, he becomes weak and loses all his strength, such that a young boy can climb onto his back and grab hold of his ears, and the lion is not capable of defending himself.

Someone from the plain of Ghawr in Syria once told me that one of his countrymen saw a lion one day lying along the bank of the Jordan River, with his back to the water and his tail dangling within it, spraying droplets of water onto his back and sides. The man from Ghawr was on the other side of the river, and he lost no time in crossing it and making his way stealthily over to the lion, until he was behind him. Then he seized hold of the lion's flanks and dragged him to the water. The lion tried to leap away and struck the ground with his two front paws, but the sand slipped away from underfoot and he could not gain a steady foothold. So he slid into the water and the man from Ghawr climbed on top of him, grabbed hold of his ears, struck him with a knife that he was carrying, and killed him.

The people of Ghawr are shrewd in their ways of killing wild beasts, using various means of confrontation. What happened to this man is quite rare; I have not heard of it happening to anyone else, but it is well-known among the people of Ghawr.

They say that a lion is never free from fever, which is why the doctors call it the lion's disease. The lion is long-lived, and Avicenna said that the fat of the lion can dissolve hardened tumors.

Abū al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbī once described a lion in verse:

A rose-colored lion, approaching Tiberias to drink
His roar resounding to the Euphrates and the Nile
Dyed in the blood of horsemen and wearing a forest around his head
Dense as the tangled thickets of his covert
Solitary as the reclusive monks, though
He knows nothing of what is forbidden and permitted
He fell upon the Jordan like a plague
Piling high the heads of misfortunate travelers
He pads the ground softly,
Gentle as a doctor taking his patient's pulse
Curling his tail high above his forequarters
Like a crown upon his head
His appearance strikes fear into the knight's steed
Which shuffles its steps as though it were shackled.

THE TIGER

As for the tiger and what has been said about it—it is an Indian beast, though it has been said that it is Abyssinian. It looks like a large lion with variegated yellow and black fur. It is said that it is a cross between a *zibriqān* and a lioness.* It is in its nature to be at peace with the panther and other beasts, as long as it is not rabid; otherwise, every animal that used to be at peace with it fears it. The tiger and the lion are eternally amicable, just like the dung beetle and the scorpion, or the snake and the gecko. It is said that the female tiger is impregnated by the wind,* and for this reason it is said that it resembles the wind in speed when it runs, and nothing can hunt it [. . .] I have not been able to find any poetry that describes the tiger, nor any epistle that I might transmit.

THE PANTHER

As for what has been said about the panther—the writers on the natures of animals have claimed that the panther delivers its young with a viper coiled around its neck. The snake bites and releases its venom but does not kill. It is part of the panther's nature and manner that it remains satiated for three days, which it spends asleep, and wakes up on the fourth day. When it does not hunt, it does not eat; it will not eat of the kills of other animals, just like the lion. It will not eat rotting carcasses, even if it dies from hunger. Nor will it eat human flesh, except to treat itself for a disease that it suffers from.

The panther has a malevolent nature, a sharp temper, a frowning face, and an intense rage. For this reason, it is said of a man who is deeply angry with his enemy: "He clothed himself in the skin of a panther."

The panther has a very significant leap, ascending up to forty cubits to his lair. It has been witnessed leaping into a sheep enclosure at night, snatching a ewe and tossing it out of the enclosure, then leaping back out, landing on the ground, and plucking the ewe out of the air before it falls onto the ground.

One of its strange qualities is that a person bitten by a panther will attract mice, who seek out the person in order to urinate on him. If a mouse succeeds in doing so, the person will die. People take great care to guard those who have been bitten by panthers, for a mouse will do its best to seek out the wounded person. One of the most amazing stories I've heard is that a person was once wounded by a panther and took great care to protect himself from the mice. He got into a boat

and went out into the water, thinking that no mouse could reach him. It so happened that Fate—whose decree is unavoidable—determined that a kite snatched a mouse from the ground and flew into the sky, and when it passed over the wounded man, the mouse urinated on him and he died.

In one of the old books, it was said that if a panther bites a human being, the wound should be rubbed with a sumac blossom, and then a mouse will not approach him. This is the route to recovery, and I was told about this from someone who had experimented with it firsthand. The panther loves to drink wine, which is how it may be hunted, for when it gets drunk, it falls asleep.

ON THE CHEETAH

Aristotle said: “A cheetah is a cross between a lion and a panthress, or a panther and a lioness.” It is said that if a cheetah has a difficult pregnancy, any male cheetah that sees her will take care of her and share the fruits of his hunt. When she is ready to give birth, she secludes herself in a place that she has prepared and remains there until she teaches her young how to hunt. The cheetah is proverbial for its sleepiness.

Al-Jāhiz said, quoting Aristotle: “If a cheetah is afflicted with the disease known as cheetah-strangler, it may eat some dung and thereby be cured.”* And they say that there is no animal the size of a cheetah that falls so heavily and shatteringly upon the back of its prey. The females are more refractory and bold than the males. Modesty is part of its nature, such that if a man runs his hand along the body of a female cheetah, she will remain calm until his hand approaches the vulva, at which point she will grow agitated and angry.

It is said that the first person to hunt with a cheetah was Kulayb Wā'il, or perhaps Hammām ibn Murra, a man of leisure and music.* The first to carry a cheetah on a horse was Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān. The one most famous for sporting with cheetahs was Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī, the leader of the Abbasid revolution. The first to establish the practice of the hunting circle was al-Mutadid bi-l-llāh.

Cheetahs are found in the territories between the Hijāz and Yemen, the Hijāz and Iraq, and between India and Tibet. They are also found in Bariyyat 'Īdhāb, in the environs of Qūs, in Egypt.*

The poets and eloquent ones have excelled in their descriptions of cheetahs, both in poetry and prose. For example, this hunting epistle by Abū Ishāq al-Sābī:

“We had with us cheetahs darting like lightning, faster than arrows loosed at a deserter, more intelligent than lions, more cunning than

foxes, stealthier than scorpions, lank-hipped and empty-bellied, dappled of frame. Red-cornered slits for eyes, open mouths, broad brows and wide necks, baring teeth like spear heads. The cheetah spies the gazelle at great distance, knows its sounds, tracks its droppings and resting places, scents its musk.”

Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Sirāj described it thus:

Snarling mouth and paw possess
Cutting swords and slender spears
Night and day both claim a share of it
Cloaked in its pebble-printed garment
And the sun, ever since they nicknamed it the gazelle
Has risen over this watcher with dread.

Ibn al-Mutazz said:

It hunts but with a single bound
Flying on four outsized legs
Of all the wind's offspring, it is the resplendent one
Trailing its tail on the ground
It clings to the neck of its prey
Like the embrace of a spurned lover
When its enemy sees it chasing behind
Its conscience whispers words of perdition into its ear

THE DOG

As for what has been said about the dog, it is in its nature to protect its master and also to protect the women when his master is present or absent, sleeping or awake. The dog is the most vigilant of animals when he is in need of sleep, and the sleepest of animals during the day, when his masters have no need of him to guard them. Among the amazing things about the dog is that he will show regard for the most honorable and respectable people and will not bark at them, and may even move out of their way to allow them to pass. Meanwhile, he will bark at the black man, the slovenly, the contemptible, and the mean.

The dog is associated with various beneficial medicinal properties. Avicenna said that dog urine may be used to treat warts, while dog blood may treat dog bites and the poison of Armenian arrows.

Ibn Khafāja said of the dog:

Ochre-coated, he yanks his leash free
Trailing it like a shooting star in a dusty sky
He follows a road wiped of footprints

Yet reads their traces like letters
Leanness has bowed his back, he is
As thin as a waning crescent moon, hidden in the rising dust
He smiles, revealing teeth like arrowheads
And walks along upon thrusting spears

THE WOLF

It is said that if a wolf cannot find something to eat, it may be nourished by breathing in the breeze. Its stomach can melt bones but not date stones. Someone who concerned himself with the secrets of the natures of animals said that none but the dog and the wolf fight with their mates during copulation, and wolves mate while reclining on the ground. A wolf's penis is made of bone.

A wolf is known for its solitariness and wild nature. If it discovers a sheep pasture, it will howl at the sheep to inform them of its location and proximity. Then, when the dogs light out in the direction of the wolf, it slants back stealthily toward the unguarded sheep.

A wolf will not return to a kill after it is satiated by it. It sleeps with one eye open and the other closed. When the sleeping eye has received its share, the wolf opens it and lets the other go to sleep.

It has a powerful sense of smell, and it is said that it can pick up a scent from a *farsakh* away. It hunts sheep in the morning, waiting for the dogs to become languorous and fall asleep. It is a custom of wolves that if two of them kill a ewe, they split it evenly between them.

If a wolf treads upon the leaves of a wild onion (squill), it dies immediately. The enmity between the wolf and the sheep is so great that if some bowstrings are plucked together—one made from the intestines of a wolf, and several others from the intestines of a sheep—they will not make any sound.

THE HYENA

It is said that the hyena is like the rabbit, which changes its sex. Its names include the Shitter, the Soiled One, Marrow-Slurper, Long-Mane, the Lame, and the Limper.

The female hyena has a passion for digging up graves due to her lust for human flesh. If the corpse is naked and his body is swollen, with an inflated penis, it is the custom of the female hyena to climb on top of it and satisfy her needs, and then eat it. She is a libertine. She will not let another animal of her kind pass by without displaying

herself to him so that he may mount her. To the Bedouins, she was proverbial for her corruption, for when she came upon sheep, she caused mischief among them. Nor is the hyena satisfied with what the wolf is satisfied with, and when there is both a wolf and a hyena among the sheep, they are safe, for one seeks to deny the other his prey. That is the reason for the Bedouin's prayer for the sheep: "May God bring the hyena with the wolf."

THE EGYPTIAN MONGOOSE

The Bedouins call it *al-zaribān*, and Abū 'Ubayd called it *al-zaribā*. It's the size of a cat or a small dog, and it has a stinking smell. Its color is grayish, it has a very long nose, two ear holes in place of ears, short forelegs with sharp claws, and a long tail. Its back has no vertebrae or joints, but rather contains a single bone from the head to the tail. If a person catches one and tries to strike it with a sword, he will have no effect upon it until he hits the end of its nose, for its skin is as tough as leather.

The mongoose's fart has a horrible smell. It settles into clothing and will not leave until the clothes are worn out. When it farts among a large herd of camels, they disperse and can only be brought together again by the herder with great difficulty. The Bedouins had a proverb about the separation of groups, which went: "The mongoose farted among them."

For the people of Egypt, the mongoose plays the same role as the hedgehog to the people of Sijistān: killing snakes. They say that if it weren't for the mongoose, the snakes would have eaten the populace. When a mongoose sees a snake, it is its custom to approach it and pounce on it. Having seized it, the mongoose then makes itself very thin so that it resembles nothing so much as a piece of rope. Then the snake coils itself around the mongoose, at which point the latter breathes in very deeply so that its stomach expands, and the snake is ripped to pieces. Al-Jāhiz wrote: "The fart of the mongoose is its most lethal weapon. It enters the lizard's hole where its young and its eggs lie, and finds the tightest spot in the hole and closes it off with its paw, then turns tail. It scarcely farts three times before the lizard collapses in a daze. Then the mongoose eats it."

It is courageous in climbing walls, trying to catch birds. When it falls, it fills up its belly with air so that it is all puffed up, and the fall does not harm it. Some say that it resembles the sable, and one authority claimed that they were the same animal whose fur was changed by the swampland it inhabited.

THE SQUIRREL

This is a well-known animal with a fine coat. Its back is grayish and its stomach is white. Some have red backs, and those animals are wicked in character and less expensive. The squirrel moves quickly. When it spies a human being, it climbs a tall tree, which is its refuge. It is found abundantly in the lands of the Slavs and the Khazars.

THE FOX

The fox is crafty, deceitful, and strategic in seeking its fortune. Among its tricks is its habit of playing dead by inflating its stomach and putting its legs in the air. When an animal comes close to it, the fox pounces upon it. Another trick is that if the fox enters the pigeon house and is already satiated, it will kill the pigeon and cast it aside for later. When it hungers, it returns and eats it (and does the same thing with chickens).

The fox is another one of those animals that uses its excrement as a weapon. Its feces have a fouler stench than even the bustard's. When the fox confronts a hedgehog, the hedgehog meets it with its spines bristling, curling up into a ball. The fox then defecates upon it and the hedgehog cannot restrain itself from stretching out flat on the ground. Then the fox attacks its underbelly.

The wolf hunts the children of the fox, so the latter places wild onion at the entrance to its den so that the wolf cannot reach its children; for when the wolf treads upon the wild onion, it dies immediately.

Fox fur is among the finest and most desirable types of fur. It may be black, white, or the color of the poplar tree. The most inferior is the Bedouin fox, which has a thin pelt. Foxes from the lands of the Turks are called *burtāsī*, and they have thick fur and a beautiful color.

THE BEAR

The bear has a mixed nature. It eats what the wild beasts eat, grazes on what the beasts of burden graze upon, and will also eat what people eat. During mating season, it is part of its nature for every male bear to retire privately with his female, and he mates with the female while lying on the ground. The female delivers its young as a piece of meat with undifferentiated limbs, and moves from one locale to another with it out of a fear of ants. Meanwhile, she licks it until its

limbs are cleaved and it begins to breathe. The female bear experiences difficulty during childbirth. One authority has claimed that the bear delivers its young from its mouth.

Because of the intensity of her lust, the female bear invites the human being to lie with her. I have heard that a man was passing through a thicket on his way to some destination when he came upon a female bear. She took him and indicated to him that he should copulate with her. He understood her and did as she bid. When he finished, she turned to his feet and licked their underside until they were tender. She kept licking them, passing her tongue over them, until the man could no longer tread upon his own feet on the ground. At the point, the bear was guaranteed that the man could not escape, so she left him, and would go out and hunt and bring food back that he could eat, and he would copulate with her. She was careful to keep licking his feet, and so he remained in that state until a group of travelers passed nearby to him. He called out to them and they came to him, put him upon their steeds, and carried him away.

This animal has an amazing intelligence and is capable of being trained and taught; anyone who has seen it has no need for any proof of this fact. This is despite the great size and weight of its body, but it will not obey its teacher without violence and severe beatings, and by blinding the males.

ON THE CAT

There are two types of cats: wild and domesticated. The cat resembles the lion in its shape, its limbs, its leaps, its manner of hunting and running, except that it is not as bold as the lion, and yet bolder than all other animals. The cat resembles the human being in certain ways: it sneezes, yawns, and stretches. It reaches for things with its paws and washes its face and eyes with its saliva. It is in the cat's nature that the female becomes vigorous and bold during mating, such that the male runs away from her after they have finished. The male, on the other hand, exhibits this boldness before the act, so when they mate, it transfers to the female.

It is in the nature of some females to eat their young after they deliver. It is said that this behavior is the result of an excess of love for them, while others have said that it is because of a type of madness and hunger that overcomes her during childbirth. God knows best.

This animal displays praiseworthy qualities, insofar as it repays one's care and good deeds shown toward it. It also accepts training and may live in the shop of a grocer or butcher, or in a private home among the chickens and pigeons and other animals that the cat likes

to eat, and it will not confront them maliciously, nor will it eat of them as long as it is otherwise fed. It may even protect those animals from other predators and fight on their behalf, using its hunting abilities and stealth.

It is also in the cat's nature that if it is fed something, it will eat it in that spot. However, if it snatches something or steals it, it will escape with it and will not stop until it is assured of its own safety.

The poet Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Allāf wrote the following elegy for his cat. Some say that it was for his son, who had dared to sleep with the wife of a powerful man and was assassinated. It is also said that he meant this elegy for [the assassinated poet and caliph] Ibn al-Mutazz but pretended to speak about his cat out of fear of [his successor, the caliph] al-Muqtadir.

O cat! You have left us, and will not return
You were like a child to us!
How could we cease loving you?
You, who were an instrument of protection
Preventing harm, protecting us
In our absence, from beetle and rat
You flushed the mice from their hiding places
Chasing them from their holes to the thresholds
Flocks of them would cross your path in the house
And you'd fight them without any instruments
So it was until you caused harm to our neighbors
Though harm was not your intention
At first, you circled around the pool of ruin, for fear of their malice
But one who circles around any pool will come to drink from it
Thinking of you, my heart trembled
As you glided forward undeterred
Entering the pigeon house, slowly and deliberately
But you were not slow in devouring the young
Tossing the feathers all about for the bird's keepers to find
While voraciously swallowing the flesh*

THE BOAR*

The boar has the nature of a predator and a beast of prey. Its predatory character is found in its tusks and the fact of its eating carcasses. Its nature as a beast of prey is found in its cloven hooves and the fact of its grazing on herbage. The boar is characterized by lust and constant copulation, such that the female may be mounted by the male even as she is defecating. She sometimes walks for miles with the male on her back, and the unknowing observer might see the tracks of six feet and think that they belonged to a six-legged animal. The female gives birth to twenty suckling pigs, becoming pregnant

from the sperm of one male. Her gestation lasts six months, but al-Jāhiz said it was four months.

When a boar wants to attack a lion, it tests itself before approaching the lion by striking a tree with its tusks. If it breaks the tree, it will attack the lion; if not, it will run away from it and not fight it. Someone who saw this once told me that the boar's tusks got stuck in the tree and tried to escape from it but failed. The lion then came upon the boar while it was in this state and killed it.

They say that the males suffer from the disease of sodomy. Sometimes one sees a male boar cornered by twenty others, and they take turns mounting him until they have all done so. Aristotle said that the age of a boar ranges from fifteen to twenty years.

Very few poets and fine writers have mentioned the boar in their epistles and poems. I shall set down in this place what I have come upon on this topic. Among it is something 'Atā' ibn Ya'qūb al-Ghaznawī wrote, alluding equivocally to the appointment of a certain judge: * "What can one say about the appointment of a certain so-and-so, but to liken it to a man who dreamt that he had sex with a boar? Upon waking up, he went to the dream interpreter to have his dream explained, and the interpreter said: 'You stupid ass! What was it that beguiled you about the boar? Was it its soft skin, or its beautiful snout, or its elegant form, or its passionate eyes, or its joyful company, or its coquettish grunts, or its curly hair, or its white teeth?'"

Other Wild Beasts

THE ELEPHANT

It is said that the elephant derives from the buffalo and the pig, and for that reason, one of the authorities on the natures of animals claimed that elephants are aqueous in nature depending upon the amount of buffalo or pig in their breeding, for one of them lives in water and the other does not. It is said that elephants are of two types: the elephant itself and the species called *zandabīl*. In this way they are analogous to the Bactrian and Arabian camel, the cow and the buffalo, the fine horse and the nag, the mouse and the rat, the ant and the grub. Others say that the elephant is the male while the *zandabīl* is the female.

The trunk of the elephant is its nose, and it uses it to bring food and drink to its mouth. It also fights with it and makes noise. The voice of the elephant is not in proportion to the size of its body. Its tongue is inverted, with the tip of it inside its mouth and the root of it on the outside. This is contrary to what is found among all other animals. The Indians claim that were it not for this fact, the elephant would speak. They venerate elephants and honor them above all other animals.

Elephants originate in India, Sindh, Zanj, and Sarandīb (Sri Lanka). It is the largest animal, growing to a height of ten cubits. Its colors include black, white, piebald, and gray. The elephant becomes sexually mature at five years old, and the female gestates for two years. When she is pregnant, the male will not approach her, nor will he mate with her for three years after she has delivered her young. The male will not mate with more than one female, and he is fiercely jealous. When the female is ready to give birth, she goes into a river and delivers her young in the water, standing up. The male protects her and her young from snakes, for there is an enmity between them. They say that an elephant's testicles are in its body, close to its kidneys.

Elephant tusks may be curved or straight. al-Mas'ūdī wrote in his *Fields of Gold* that some tusks may weigh up to 150 *mann* (almost 300 pounds), and I myself have seen elephant tusks that were over four

cubits and a half in length, and they were curved.* I saw them in the city of Qūs in the year 697 AH (1297–98 CE).

The elephant can attack a sturdy wall with its tusks and destroy it. The kings of Ghazna from Sebūktigīn onward used to conquer cities with elephants and destroy fortresses with their assaults. The most famous of them in using this tactic was Yamīn al-Dawla Maḥmūd ibn Sebūktigīn, as you will read—God willing—in the history of the Ghaznavid State.

A poet said:

One who sits astride an elephant
Is a blessed rider, borne aloft
By a terrifying majesty,
A mountain that wanders about

THE RHINOCEROS

The rhinoceros is one of those animals that are powerful and few in number. It resembles the buffalo, except that it is larger, more rebellious, and nobler. It has a thick, short horn on its forehead, and a second, more slender horn. Aristotle mentioned it in his *Book of Animals* and called it the Indian ass.

Al-Jāhiz wrote: “Something is said of the unborn child of the rhinoceros that, were it not confirmed by the Indians, most people—indeed many scholars—would say that it were merely a legend. They say that when the female rhinoceros’s gestation period is nearing completion, and she is approaching the term of delivery, sometimes the baby rhinoceros will poke its head out of its mother’s vagina and graze on some shrubs. When it is satiated, it brings its head inside again. When the gestation period is complete and the baby is crowded in its space, the womb expels it in a strong condition and capable of running and fending for itself, and no predators will confront it.” al-Mas‘ūdī recounted the same thing.

A trustworthy person among the Abyssinians told me that rhinoceroses in Abyssinia charge at human beings to kill them whenever they spy them. If a man climbs into a tree to escape, the rhinoceros will seek to smash it and kill him, but if the man urinates on the rhinoceros’s ear, it will run away and not return to him. That way, the man will escape from it. God knows best.

THE GIRAFFE

The Bedouin Arabs called the giraffe a collection (*jamā'a*), and it was so called because it brought together the attributes of many animals in one form. It has the neck of a camel, the skin of a panther, the horns of a gazelle, the teeth of a cow, and the head of a deer. An authority on the natures of animals wrote that it was a crossbreed of many animals, a result of the gathering of beasts during the summer at the watering place where they mated. In some cases, a female mated with several males, and their seminal fluid mixed inside her, so she bore a creature of mixed appearance, shape, and color. The Persians call the giraffe a camel-cow-leopard, which accords with what the Arabs claimed about its hybrid creation from many animals. But al-Jāhiz refutes this statement, saying: "It is a piece of great ignorance, which no educated person would profess. For God creates what He wills, according to His will. This is a self-distinct type of animal just like the horse or the donkey, and what proves this to be the case is that it gives birth to its own young."

This is indisputable, for I saw a giraffe in Cairo that gave birth to another giraffe that looked like it, and it is still alive today.

‘Umāra al-Yamanī described some giraffes thus:

There were giraffes with necks
As long as banners leading an army
Nubian in origin, with the horns of an
Oryx, and the lips of a seven-year-old camel
They were created with their noses in the sky, admiring themselves
As they appear to walk backward aimlessly

THE WILD ASS

The Prophet Muhammad said of it: "The whole of the hunt is in the belly of the wild ass!"

It is said that it becomes sexually mature after thirty months, and it is known for its extreme jealousy. It is said that when the female gives birth to a colt, the adult male will [try to] bite off its penis. So the female resorts to a trick in order to protect him. She runs away with him from the father and then breaks the colt's leg in order to keep it confined to that safe place. She takes care of him and nurses him, and when his leg has set, strengthened, and healed such that he can walk upon it, he will by then have gained the ability to run and defend himself so that he can escape if his father or anyone stronger tries to geld him.

They say that the wild ass lives for two hundred years or longer, and for every hundred years it lives it grows another organ to urinate

with. Some have been seen with three or four such organs.

THE GAZELLE

This animal lives in the hills. If it cannot find water, it is in its nature to sniff moisture out of the breeze instead. When running away from a predator, it does not exert itself greatly in the first instance, but rather goes easily until it sees that its pursuer has grown close to it. Then it picks up speed until it outruns its stalker.

The gazelle may be hunted with fire, for when it sees fire it is amazed and bewildered by it, especially if the lighting of fires is accompanied by the ringing of bells. Then the gazelle becomes feeble and cannot move at all.

There is great affection between the gazelle and the partridge.

THE HARE

The authorities on the natures of animals have written that the hare's penis is like the fox's: one part of it is bone and the other part sinew. Sometimes the female mounts the male during the mating season out of extensive lust. She mates even when she is pregnant. And they claim that the hare changes sex every two months. Ibn al-Athīr wrote in his *History* (in the year 623 AH [1226 CE]): "In this year a friend of mine hunted a hare, and found that it had two testicles, a penis, and a vagina. When they split open its belly, they also found that it had two wombs that had been torn by fetuses."

They say that if a hare sees the sea, it dies, which is why it is not found near the coast. The Bedouins claimed that the jinn run away from the hare when it is menstruating. There is no short-legged animal that is as fast a runner as the hare. It treads upon the back of its feet, obscuring its tracks so that its hunter will not be able to track it.

THE MONKEY

According to the authorities on animals, the monkey is a cross between a human being and a beast. If it falls into the water, it drowns like a human being who is not a good swimmer. It observes the practice of marriage and is jealous of the female. It gets lice, and when it does, it rids itself of them, eating what it removes from its

body.

The male monkey is very lusty, and when its lust heightens, it performs fellatio on itself. The female gives birth to a large number of monkeys, around ten or more, just like the pig. She carries her young in the same way that a woman does.

They say that when a group of monkeys goes to sleep, they lie next to one another in single file. Once they have fallen asleep, the first of them lying on the right side wakes up, walks past them all, and sits down beyond the last monkey on the left side. He shouts out as he sits, and so the next monkey awakens and does the same thing. They follow this practice throughout the night, waking up in a different place than where they went to sleep.

The monkey has an undeniable propensity toward training and education. A monkey belonging to Yazid ibn Mu'āwiya was even trained to ride donkeys and race them. [. . .] I have not found a poem related to the description of the monkey.

THE OSTRICH

The ostrich is called a "camel bird" in Persian. Among its wondrous qualities is that after it lays its eggs, it broods upon them in equal measure. Its body cannot cover all of them, for it might brood over thirty or forty eggs. When it goes out to find food, it might pass the egg of another ostrich and brood upon it, forgetting her own eggs.

It is said that the ostrich divides her eggs into three groups: those that she broods over, those whose yolks she eats for sustenance, and those that she breaks open and leaves until they rot. Maggots sprout from the rotting eggs, which she feeds to her chicks when they hatch.

When any animal with two legs breaks one of them, it makes use of the other one to stand up and move around. All except the ostrich, which stays sedentary in the same spot until it dies from starvation. The poet said:

When the ostrich's leg breaks it does not
Stand upon its mate, nor drag itself on its rump

The Bedouin Arabs say that the ostrich is deaf and makes up for in smell what it lacks in hearing, for it uses its beak to ascertain what it cannot hear. A Bedouin saying is: "Stupider than an ostrich," because when the hunter finds it, the ostrich puts its head in a heap of sand, believing that it has escaped from him. The ostrich has a high tolerance for thirst and is a strong runner. It runs hardest into the wind, when it stretches its neck against its back, thereby piercing

through the wind.

Livestock

THE HORSE

Al-Thalabī reported in his exegesis of the Quran that the Prophet Muhammad said: “When God decided to create the horse, He said to the South Wind: ‘I shall make a creature out of you that will be a source of strength for my friends, abasement for my enemies, and beauty to those who obey Me.’ The South Wind replied: ‘Create it.’ So God grasped a handful of the wind and created the horse. He said to it: ‘I have made you Arabian and knotted goodness into your forelocks. I have gathered riches upon your back and placed compassion for you in the heart of your master. I have made you fly without wings, for you are to be used for hunting and fleeing, and I will place men on your back who will praise Me by day and night.’”

As for what has been said about the nature and behavior of the horse, its praiseworthy qualities and virtues, and the signs of nobility and excellence in a horse, the Bedouins say that there are two types of horses: the thoroughbred and the draft horse. The difference between the two is that the bones of the draft horse are thicker than those of the thoroughbred, while the thoroughbred’s bones are harder and heavier. The draft horse can carry a greater burden, while the thoroughbred is swifter. The thoroughbred is to the draft horse as the gazelle is to the sheep.

The horse is by nature vain, haughty, proud, self-admiring, and loving of its master. It is also in its nature to drink only from water that is stirred up, such that if it comes to a source of undisturbed water, it will strike it with its hoof so as to make it murky and turbid. However, if it happens to drink from undisturbed water when it is thirsty and spies its own reflection, it will shun it and refuse to drink out of fear of the vision it sees in the water.

The mare’s gestation period is an entire year; this is what is commonly known of its behavior. However, someone I trust once told me that he owned a broodmare that would gestate for thirteen months before giving birth. I also once heard that the Mongols have a type of horse that gestates for nine months, and the person who told me this said that this was a well-known fact which the Mongols did not deny

nor found strange.

With regard to the characteristics that together amount to the nobility of a horse and indicate its excellence, there is the response of Ayyūb Ibn al-Qirriya to the governor of Iraq, al-Hajjāj, when he asked him for a description of the fine racehorse. He said: "It is short in three ways, long in three ways, wide in three ways, and clear in three ways." Al-Hajjāj replied: "Describe them." Ayyūb said: "It has long ears, a long neck, and long forelegs. It has a short back, short shanks, and a short tailbone. It has a wide brow, nostrils, and mouth. And it is clear of skin, eyes, and hooves."

The first to liken the horse to the gazelle, the wolf, and the ostrich—and was then followed and imitated by all the poets—was Imru' al-Qays, when he declaimed:*

It has the flanks of a gazelle, the two legs of the ostrich
The lope of the wolf, the fox cub's trot
When he sets off, his back seems as smooth as the pounding-slab
Of a bride's perfume or the colocynth, to be split
Charging, fleeing, hurtling forward, all together
Like a boulder carried down a raging torrent
Swift as a child's spinning top, whipped around
Between his two hands by the trailing thread
A dark bay, the saddle-felt slipping off his back
Like a raindrop off a smooth rock

THE MULE

The authorities on the natures of animals have written that the mule's offspring never lives, nor is the mule infertile. Similarly, a she-mule's offspring never lives, and yet it is not barren. Mules are longer-lived than their parents and more patient.

Mules are the steeds of leaders, descendants of the Prophet and other nobles, judges, and scholars. They prefer the she-mules to the he-mules, and the Maghribis do not ride the he-mules at all, assigning them instead to carrying garbage. The chief judge Jamāl al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Sulaymān informed me of this, and also said: "When a leader calls for a he-mule for somebody, that is a sign of that person's public disgrace. No one rides a he-mule among us [i.e., the Maghribis] except the garbage man and the disgraced person." And the best reason for preferring she-mules over he-mules is that the Prophet Muhammad rode them and owned them.

THE DOMESTIC DONKEY

The authorities on the natures of animals have written that the donkey reaches sexual maturation after three and a half years, and that if a donkey smells a lion, it soils itself out of fear. That is why Abū Tammām, in addressing ‘Abd al-Samad ibn al-Mu‘adhḥal, wrote: *

Woe unto you! You’ve dared to satirize me at your own peril,
Like a donkey advancing, terrified, toward the lion.

The donkey is known for its acute sense of hearing. When it brays, it is more annoying than a dog. . . . The cold ails the donkey and injures it. This is why no donkeys are found in the lands of the Slavs.

The best donkeys are the Egyptian ones, and the people of Egypt attend carefully to raising them. They take great care of them and race with them. They call the place where they race them *al-Tābiq*. The best of them are sold for a high price. The author of the book *Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts* (Jamāl al-Dīn al-Watwāt) recounted that an Egyptian donkey was once sold for 110 dinars. As for myself, I have seen a donkey sold for a thousand dirhams, and some for more than a thousand. Many Egyptians ride donkeys and prefer not to ride horses or mules. Those notables who ride donkeys despite having the means to ride horses and mules do so out of modesty, eschewing arrogance. The rich who ride donkeys and leave aside horses or mules do so, perhaps, in order to save money out of miserliness. As for the young men and the common people, they ride donkeys for pleasure because of their briskness and the speed of their gait.

Abū ‘l-‘Aynā once said to a donkey agent: * “Buy me a donkey that’s not too tall and not too short; who gallops forth when the street is clear and saunters when it is busy; who doesn’t knock me against columns, and who stays out from under the reed mats (that overhang the market stalls); and who is grateful when I increase his fodder and patient when I reduce it; who is agreeable when I ride him, but who stops when someone else rides him.” The dealer replied: “If God transforms one of our judges into a donkey, you’ll get what you’re looking for. Otherwise, it does not exist.”

ON THE CAMEL

The camel is one of the great kindnesses bestowed by God upon His creation, which He granted out of His grace and provision. God said: “And the cattle—He created them for you; in them is warmth and uses various, and of them you eat; and there is beauty in them for you, when you bring them home to rest and when you drive them forth

abroad to pasture; and they bear your loads unto a land that you never would reach, without great distress. Surely your Lord is All-clement, All-compassionate.” (Q 16:5–7)* And He said: “Have they not seen how We have created for them of Our handiwork the cattle, so that they are their owners; and have subdued them unto them, so that some of them they have for riding, some for food? Benefits and (milk) to drink have they from them. Will they not then give thanks?” (Q 36:71–73)

Let us recount what we know about the different names the Bedouins gave to the camel from the moment it was born until the end of its life, as well as the names for riding camels and load-bearing camels, the names and qualities specific to she-camels, their colors and what has been said about the classification of the ways they walk, on riding them and dismounting, and then we will discuss the different species of camels and what has been said about their habits and natures.

As for the names of the camel, from the time of its birth until the end of its life, the Bedouins called a camel’s offspring the Drawn-Forth when it is delivered from its mother, and then the Adjoined or the Unweaned up until the age of a year. . . . It is a Breaker when it separates from its mother, and in its second year, it is called a Son of a Laboring One, because its mother becomes pregnant and is seized by labor pains . . . and the young she-camel is called Daughter of Laboring One. In its third year, the male camel is called Son of the Milch-Camel, as its mother will have milk. In its fourth year, it is called the Suitable, for it will be suitable for bearing loads. [And so on and so forth. . . .]

As for the names and qualities specific to the she-camel, among them are the Majestic for the large ones, High-Humped for the she-camel with the tall hump, and Full-Cheeked for the strong she-camel. A thin she-camel is called Skinny, Edge, and Monk.

As for the descriptions of the way a camel walks, if its forelegs are soft, it is called Tender-Soled, if it is reckless in its speed, it is called the Reckless, and if it takes short steps, it is called the Shuffler. If it walks as though its legs are bound, knocking the ground with its forelegs, it is called the Trotter. If it is fast, then it is the Wind-Borne and the Dispersed. And if she drags her legs while walking, then she is called the Crawler.

As for the colors of the camel, they say that if no other hue is mixed with the redness of a camel, then it is called red. If some blackness is mixed into the red, then this is called dun-colored. If it is black mixed with white, like the smoke of *rimth* wood,* it is called ash-colored. If it is intensely black, it is called jet black, and if it is white, then it is called hide-colored, and if its whiteness is mixed with red, then it is

chestnut-colored.

Camels are of three types: the Yemeni, the 'Irābī, and the Bukht. The Yemeni is the noble-born beast, occupying the status of the thoroughbred among horses, while the Irābī has the status of the nag, and the Bukht is like the mule.

Star-navigation is in the camel's nature, as is knowledge of roads, jealousy, sudden violence, and forbearance in the face of a heavy burden and thirst. Camels prefer to drink murky water, and when it comes to the river to drink, it stirs up the water with its foot so that it becomes murky. It is among the lovers of the sun, and it recognizes poisonous plants by smell after a single encounter, and then avoids them when it goes to pasture and does not make a mistake except with plants that have gone dry. Aristotle claimed that the camel lives for thirty years, in most cases. Al-Watwāt wrote, on the authority of someone else: "Some camels have been known to live for one hundred years."

If a Bedouin tribe's camels proliferated and grew to one thousand strong the tribe, they would put out the eye of the stallion. And if it grew beyond a thousand, they would put out his other eye. We have mentioned this in our discussion of the superstitions of the Bedouins, in the second chapter of the second book of this text, which is in the third volume of this copy. And God knows best.

Abd al-J'Abbār Ibn Hamdīs described the camel in verse:*

A ship of the land, she glides along
Upon the shimmering mirages of morning
She has an evil streak that I don't mind
As the desert stretches out before me
My cloak flutters, and appears to you as
A bird flapping its wings on the saddle
If anyone should mock her gait
Regard the thoroughbreds behind her perishing!
She is the bow and I am her arrow
Finding my target in every wasteland.

DOMESTIC CATTLE

The authorities who have written about the natures of animals say that the bull will mate with a cow after he is one year old, and may do so for ten months. A cow's milk begins to flow once she has given birth; prior to that, she does not have any milk. She carries her young for nine months and gives birth in the tenth. If she gives birth before that, the calf does not live. Sometimes she gives birth to twins, but

that is rare and is considered (by the aforementioned authorities) to be an ill omen. If her calf dies or if it is slaughtered, the mother will not stop bellowing nor will she yield any milk. For that reason, the cattle herders skin the hide of the calf and then stuff it, so that the mother will give milk and stop bellowing. Cows prefer water that is not moving, unlike horses and camels.

In Egypt, in the vicinity of Damietta and Tinnīs, there are cows that are called Khays cows, which are large and beautiful in shape and markings.* This cow has horns like crescents and is prone to stampeding and unsociability. It cannot be used for labor but may be milked. It does not eat grains and makes its home in places where there is plentiful vegetation and water. The herders call it by certain names when they want to milk it, and it approaches them.

Ibn Dāniyāl recited the following poem to me himself:*

My God, what a Khays calf!
Golden and coquettish
She shows you the eyes of an oryx
Beneath the horns of a gazelle
Clothed in a noble coat
And crowned with a crescent

ON THE WATER BUFFALO

Al-Jāhiz wrote that water buffalo are the sheep of the cattle world.* The water buffalo is the animal most disturbed by mosquitoes and the most intent on fleeing from them into the water. And yet, it approaches the lion quite calmly. It is said that the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tasim once presented two water buffalo to a lion, and they defeated him. Then he brought out one water buffalo with her child, and she defeated the lion and protected her child. Then he brought out a single water buffalo, and it pounced upon the lion and then turned its back on him. This is despite the strength of the lion's mouth and paws, and its great courage and attacks, its power, forbearance, quickness, and its abilities in hunting and fleeing. The water buffalo has none of this, and can only boast the use of his horns, which are not sharp like the horns of the antelope. Therefore, if the water buffalo can overpower the lion despite these shortcomings, this indicates that it possesses formidable strength. For this reason, al-Jāhiz gave preference to the water buffalo over the lion, and used this strength as his pretext for doing so.

There is nothing strange about the story told about al-Mu'tasim and the water buffalo's victory over the lion. For the water buffalo in the

lowlands of Syria fight the lion and resist it, preventing it from oppressing them. Some of the owners of water buffalo in those parts encase their horns in copper and sharpen their points, with the aim of helping them in their war against the lion.

In Egypt the water buffalo fights the crocodile—which is the lion of the river—and overpowers it in the water. In this way it fights both the lion of the land and the lion of the river. In the lowlands and coastal areas of Syria, and in the places where it is hot and there is a lot of water, the water buffalo is used in tilling the soil, carrying loads, pulling wagons, and for its milk. In Egypt it is not used for any of these things except for its milk and the things that are produced from it.

The milk of the water buffalo is among the most delicious and richest of all types of milk. The herders call each animal by its own name, which it recognizes when called to be milked.

Venomous Creatures

ON DEADLY VENOMOUS CREATURES, INCLUDING SNAKES AND SCORPIONS

Snakes are very diverse. They compose a race of many different types, shapes, and natures. Some are large, some are small, some aggressive toward human beings and others afraid of them. Some will not strike unless they are trod upon, while some strike only if they are trod upon while in their den. And still others will not even strike in that circumstance, unless they are guarding their eggs or their young. And some will not strike unless they have been harmed by people in the past.

The black snake (*al-aswad*), for example, harbors a secret rancor for humans and seeks them out, lying in wait for them among their provisions until it strikes.* There is a certain season in which it will kill anything that it bites. The viper, on the other hand, is different. It comes out in the summer in the early evening, when the burning sand has cooled, and it goes to the upper part of a road where it goes around and around like a millstone and raises its head. It will bite anyone who treads on it or touches it. And the viper is one of those snakes that lies in wait for its prey, and it will strike in any season and any situation. The courageous snake (*al-shuj'ā*) leaps upon its prey and it rises up on its tail.

To the Bedouin Arabs, the snake stood, proverbially, for the quality of transgression.* They would say: “More transgressive than a snake,” because it does not make its own home, and every home that it heads toward is left to it by its fleeing residents.

The snake has a forked tongue, which is black. One of the exegetes of the Quran claimed that God punished the snake when it allowed Satan to enter its mouth so as to address Adam and Eve and to trick them, and its punishment comprised ten things including the fork in its tongue. That is why one sees the snake—when it is struck by a blow meant to kill it—sticking out its tongue to its striker in order to show God’s punishment, as though it were begging for mercy. It is said that among the specific properties of the snake is that if its eye is plucked out, it grows back. The same goes for its tooth; if it is ripped

out or cut with shears, it will grow back after three nights. Its tail, too, grows back when cut. Part of its nature is to flee from a naked man. It is pleased by fire, seeking it out and marveling at it, as it does with milk, melon, mandrake, and mustard. If it smells alcohol, it will not try to prevent itself [from going in search of it], and if it finds the source it will drink until it gets drunk. Sometimes this is the cause of its death, because when it gets drunk it goes numb. It detests the smell of rue and loses control of itself when it is in the air, which is why it is sometimes hunted with rue. When it is struck with sugarcane it dies, just as it does when it is struck by a whip that had previously been touched by the sweat of a horse. And it is said that it does not die a natural death but must be killed.

Among the most amazing things I witnessed with respect to vipers was the time when one was sliced up in my presence at the Mansūrī hospital in Cairo in the year 706 AH [1306 CE], in order to make the Fārūq theriac.* Its head and tail were cut off according to custom, it was skinned, its belly was cut open, and it was gutted while continuing to tremble. Then it was boiled and its meat was stripped off of its bones. I looked at it, and it was still trembling. I was amazed by that and said so to the chief physician, ‘Alam al-Dīn Ibn Abī Hulayqa, who was present among the assembled group, and he said: “That isn’t as amazing as what you will see now. Call for the viper pastilles that were prepared over a year ago.”* So I did, and they were brought by the quartermaster. They were suspended in honey. The viper meat had been pounded after it was boiled and then ground up with semolina and made into pastilles, then placed into honey for over a year. He said to me: “Look at the pastilles,” and I did, and lo and behold! They were trembling gently.

Aristotle asserted that, in Abyssinia, there are snakes with wings. Al-Mawlā Sharaf al-Dīn Ahmad ibn al-Bazdī told me the following: “I was in the city of al-Ramla (in Palestine) in the year 1302, accompanying Sharaf al-Dīn ibn Kh‘Alīl, who had with him the local magistrate and a large group of people including some sailors and others. We looked up into the sky, and lo and behold! There were two huge snakes flying in the air heading out toward the sea. Each of them was as big as a six-year-old camel. One of them flew straight ahead while the other flew crookedly, bending at the head, middle, and tail. They were higher than an arrow shot from the ground. We recorded this event and made many copies of it.”

ON VENOMOUS CREATURES THAT ARE NOT DEADLY

These include the dung beetle, the gecko, the thorn-tail lizard, the

weasel, the chameleon, the hedgehog, mice and rats, ticks, ants, grubs, lice, and nits.

The Beetle

They say that beetles are born from putrid earth. There are different types, among them the well-known dung beetle and also the black beetle, which is born from cattle dung. It dies if it smells perfume or if it is buried in roses. If it is then unearthed and buried in horse dung, it will live. What is most likely is that they don't die but simply go numb and stop moving, and if they are treated with the substance that they are generated from, they are strengthened again. And God knows best.

Among the kinds of beetles is the wood louse, which is born from moist places and mostly in bathhouses and fountains. It is found in different colors, including black, chestnut, and white. A poet once said, describing the wood louse:

Wood lice are a species never described
By anyone as I have described them
Like the halves of unripe red dates set aside
After being split, their stems still on them

The Gecko

The gecko is also called the poisonous leper. It has been claimed that it is deaf, and that the reason for its deafness and its leprosy is that when Abraham was cast by Nimrod into the fire, all the beasts of the world tried to extinguish it, while the gecko blew on it. So it became deaf and leprous.

They say that a gecko will not go into a house that has saffron in it. The snake befriends the gecko, just as the scorpion befriends the dung beetle.

Avicenna said that the gecko's urine and its blood have amazing benefits for scrotal hernias among young boys if it is cooked and they are made to sit in it. Or, some musk may be added to the gecko's urine or blood and applied to the opening of the boy's urethra, and it will have a beneficial effect against the hernia. It is said that gecko liver lessens the pain of teething.

The Thorn-Tail Lizard

Al-Jāhiz wrote in his *Book of Animals* that among the wonders of the thorn-tail lizard is that it has two penises and the female has two vulvae. He said that this is unheard of in any animal except this one, and this is according to the Bedouins.

Abū Hayya al-N'Umayrī was asked about the penis of the thorn-tail

lizard, and he claimed that it is like the tongue of the snake, with a single base and a forked tip.* Along these lines, al-Kisā'ī declaimed this verse:

Though you have split, you remain unified
Like the divided penis of the thorn-tail lizard

The thorn-tail lizard is among those animals that are eaten, but some Bedouins used to upbraid the Banū Tamīm tribe about eating its flesh. The proof of its permissibility is the canonical tradition that says that the Prophet Muhammad was in the home of Maymūna, and a meal was brought consisting of grilled thorn-tail lizard. He stretched forth his hand to eat some of it, and someone said to him: "O Prophet of God, this is thorn-tail lizard," and he pulled his hand away. So Khālid ibn al-W'Alid asked: "O Prophet of God, is it forbidden to eat this?" He responded: "No, but it is not found in the land of my people, so I don't eat it." Then Khālid ibn al-W'Alid ate it in the presence of the Prophet of God, and he did not forbid him from doing so.

Abū Nuwās wrote, mocking the eating of lizard:

When a Tamimi comes to you, full of himself
Pay no mind, and ask him how he likes eating lizard

The Chameleon

The chameleon has fingers, which I believe are for digging in the dirt. Its color is black and yellow, mixed together like the cheetah. . . . When the chameleon is in the sun, it is brilliantly colorful, and when it goes into the shade, it is less so. When it grows close to death or dies, it turns yellow. It always seeks out the sun. When the sun rises, the chameleon points itself in its direction, and when the sun sets and the chameleon can no longer see it, it becomes somewhat crazed.

§3.5

Birds and Fish

This chapter covers what has been said about the eagles, goshawks, sakers, peregrine falcons, and their different types; and on their different qualities, natures, and habits.

THE EAGLE

It has been said that all eagles are female, with not a male among them. . . . And some say that male eagles are actually a different species of bird with a pleasing figure. . . . And they say that it is in the nature of the male eagle to test his female on whether she has been loyal to him or whether she has been with a male bird from a different species, and he does this by pointing the eyes of his chicks toward the rays of the sun. If they fix upon it, then he knows that they are his young, whereas if they glance away from the sun's rays, then he strikes the female in the way that a man strikes the adulteress, pushes her out of his nest, and throws the chicks away.

Sometimes the eagle hunts a wild ass, and after spotting it she dives into some water and gets her wings wet, then she rolls around in the dirt. Then she flies until she falls upon the head of the wild ass and she flaps her wings upon its eyes so that they fill up with dirt. The wild ass is unable to see where to go, so he is taken.

THE GOSHAWK

The goshawk makes its nest in thick trees and deep shade. . . . It will only build a nest in a tree with thorns. When it wants to lay its eggs, it builds a home for itself with a roof that keeps out the rain and the heat. It avoids the cold by warming itself near fire and by placing fox pelts beneath its feet.

It has light wings and it flies very quickly, circling in the air like a ring dove. . . . The females are bolder than the males, among all of the large birds. It is said that during mating season, all of the hunting

birds mate with the female goshawk, including the black-winged kite, the peregrine falcon, and the saker, and that she will bear the young of any bird that mates with her. This is why goshawks have different characteristics.

ON THE FALCON

The falcon has three subspecies: the saker, the hobby, and the merlin. The Bedouin Arabs called every predatory bird a falcon, including the vulture and the eagle. It is the mule of the beasts of prey, in the sense that it can endure more hardship than others. It is trained to attack gazelles and hares but not other birds. Its manner of attack is to fall suddenly upon its prey. They say that it is calmer in temperament than the goshawk, and quicker to befriend humans, easier to coax and persuade.

The qualities that point to a falcon's good breeding and skillfulness include a red color, a large head, wide eyes, a well-formed beak, a long neck and wings, a broad breast, an ample trunk, large thighs, short legs and tail, et cetera.

The hobby is to the saker as the black-winged kite is to the goshawk. It hunts hares but cannot hunt gazelles because of its small size. It also hunts some water birds. The merlin is called the shearer in Egypt and Syria, because of the lightness of its wings and their speed. It is a short-tailed bird, and it is cold and moist of humor, like the sparrow hawk, but it is hotter and drier of humor than the saker, which is why it is braver.

THE PEREGRINE FALCON

They say that the first to hunt with a peregrine falcon was Constantine, the king of Amorium. It is said that he went out one day to hunt, and when he came to an open field he saw a peregrine swooping down upon the water birds. He marveled at its speed and eagerness, so he caught it and trained it. Thereafter, many peregrines were trained for him and taught to hover around about his head while he was riding so as to shade him from the sun. . . . And when he came down from his steed, it would fly down to him.

This is what I was able to find out throughout my research on what the specialists had to say about the carnivorous birds. However, they neglected some types, including one that is more glorious than all of the ones we have mentioned, and that is the gyrfalcon.

THE GYRFALCON

This is a noble and beautiful bird. It is white with black spots and is highly prized by kings, who spend great sums on it. In recent years it was purchased from the merchants for a thousand dinars, but its price has come down of late and settled at about five hundred dirhams. The merchants have a certain practice: if in the course of bringing these birds back from the lands of the Franks one of them dies in transit before they arrive, they bring its plumage to the king and are given half the price they would have received if it had been alive. This encourages them to carry these birds all the way to Egypt. Only the sultan may buy this bird, and none of the commanders may hunt with it except those whom the sultan has conferred his favor upon.

ON THE SCAVENGER BIRDS

This chapter encompasses what has been said about the vulture, the Egyptian vulture, the kite, and the crow. These birds are called scavengers (lit. "dogs") because they eat corpses and carrion and seek them out; in that respect, they are like dogs.

THE VULTURE

The vulture has a beak but does not have talons, but rather nails made of iron in the shape of talons. It mates as a rooster does. Those who have written about the natures of animals have claimed that the female vulture lays her eggs when the male looks at her, and that she does not brood upon her eggs but rather lays them in a high place where the sun's midday heat will beat down upon them. This takes the place of brooding.

The vulture is known for its sharp eyesight, such that it has been said that it may spot carrion from four hundred *farsakhs* away. The same goes for its sense of smell, but if it smells perfume, it dies. It is the most powerful in flight of all birds and has the strongest wings. It is claimed that it can fly from the farthest lands of the West to the East in a single day, but I consider this to be a legend.

THE KITE

They say that the kite lays two eggs at a time and sometimes three. She broods for twenty days, and her colors include black and ash-colored. It is also said that the kite does not hunt but rather steals (the prey of others). The kite can stop (in the air) while flying, and no other bird of prey can do that.*

Ibn Wahshiyya claimed that the eagle and the kite transmute into each other . . . but I consider this a legend. And it has also been said that the kite was one of Solomon's birds of prey, and he forbade all but himself from befriending or owning it. It has no flesh, but is all bone and sinew and skin and plumage. I have not found any poetry about it to relate.

ON THE HERBIVOROUS BIRDS

These include the francolin, the bustard, the peacock, the cock, the hen, the partridge, the crane, the goose, the duck, the flamingo, the kingfisher, the swallow, the jay, the starling, the quail, the hoopoe, the magpie, and the sparrow.

THE PEACOCK

It has many colors, including green, white, and speckles of black and white . . . but they are only found in the lands of the Zabaj. It is in the nature of the peacock to be vain and to marvel at its own plumage. The female lays her eggs after she attains the age of three, and the male does not become colorful until that age as well. The female lays eggs twice a year, and each time she lays twelve eggs.

THE FLAMINGO

The flamingo may be single or part of a pair. When flamingos shelter for the night, they gather in flocks, and the males sleep while the females stay awake. They prepare the dwelling places for the males. . . . They say that the flamingo does not mate [in the customary way] nor does it bear its young by brooding upon the eggs, but rather that the female is fertilized via oral regurgitation from the male. When it lays its eggs, it leaves and the male stays with the eggs and defecates upon them, and his dung serves the purpose of brooding. When the chicks emerge at the end of their incubation period, they

are immobile, and the female comes and breathes into their beaks, which makes them come alive. Then both the male and the female cooperate in raising the young.

ON THE WINGED INSECTS

Al-Jāhiz said: These are not birds, but insects that fly and also walk. . . . They include the bee, the hornet, the spider, the locust, the silkworm, the fly, the gnat, the mosquito, and the flea.

THE BEE

God Almighty said: “And your Lord inspired the bee, saying: Choose your habitations in the hills and in the trees and in that which they thatch. Then eat of all fruits, and follow the ways of your Lord, made smooth. There comes from their bellies a drink of diverse hues, wherein is healing for mankind. Surely in that is a sign for people who reflect.” (Q 16:68–69)

It was reported that a man came to the Prophet and said: “My brother’s stomach ails him, oh Messenger of God.” So the Prophet said: “Give him honey.” Then he came to him again and said: “I have done so,” and the Prophet said: “Give him honey.” And he came to him again and said: “I have done so,” and again the Prophet said: “Give him honey.” Then the man came a fourth time and the Prophet said: “God speaks truthfully, and your brother’s stomach is lying. Give him honey.” So the man did, and his brother was healed.

Aristotle said that the bee has nine species, and he recounted their names in Greek. The nourishment of the bee comes from sweet secretions of fresh flowers, and it does not settle on several different flowers but rather a single one. It only goes to the next flower after having returned to the hive. Their homes are among the most amazing buildings because they are built in such a way that may not be weakened or perforated. It is as though they were rendered carefully using a geometric tool and measurements. When a bee dies inside the hive, the living ones take it outside. The hives are built in the spring and the autumn. The spring hives are better than the autumn ones, and the small ones are more productive than the large ones.

Bees drink clean, sweet, still water and seek it out wherever it may be found. They slough their skin like snakes, and they like pleasant sounds and gather wherever there is hand clapping and dancing.

ON THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF FISH

Ibn Abi l-Ash'ath said: "Fish suck water into their gills, and it serves the same purpose that air does for human beings. They are greedy and eat a lot, and their senses of hearing and smell are stronger than humans' . . ." Their vision, though, is weaker than their hearing and smell. Their "tongues" are short and thick, and though they may look like tongues, they actually are not. Their teeth are not for chewing but rather for killing the sea creatures that they hunt and dispensing the poison they use to kill them. The smallest fish guard against large ones by seeking the shallows.

Avicenna said: "The best fish to eat is one whose body is not too large, and whose flesh is neither tough nor dry, but not so fatty that it flakes apart. It should not be slimy or stinky, and it should taste good. Tasty fish are suitable to eat, those that are buttery but not too flaky, fatty, or acrid. You should not eat a fish that quickly spoils once it is taken out of the water."

There are many different kinds of fish, some well-known to people and others not. Some are found in certain parts of the sea where others are not. It has been claimed that every animal on land has its counterpart in the sea. Let us present here what it is possible to say about the dolphin, the electric ray, the crocodile, the skink, the tortoise, the turtle, the hippopotamus, the sable, the beaver, the ermine, the frog, and the crab.

THE DOLPHIN

The dolphin looks like an inflated wineskin. It has a very small head and may be found in the Nile when the sea casts it there. It is said that there is no sea creature that has lungs except for the dolphin, and that is why it is possible to hear it inhaling and exhaling. When it comes upon a drowning person, it is his best chance at survival, for it continues to push him toward land until he is saved. The dolphin is among the strongest of sea creatures. It will not harm or eat anything but fish, and sometimes it floats on the surface of the water like a dead man. It gives birth and nurses its young, which follow it wherever it goes. It only gives birth in the summer, and it is part of its nature to befriend human beings, especially young boys. When it is hunted, several dolphins come to attack the hunter, and when he lets go of the one to face the others, it swims away. When the sailors of the Persian Sea spot a dolphin, they consider it a good omen and feel certain that they will achieve their goal, particularly in the case of

military expeditions.

THE ELECTRIC RAY

This creature is found in the Nile, and I have not heard of it being found elsewhere. It has a unique quality insofar as no human being can touch it. When a person places his hand on it, he wrenches it away and screams out in astonishment. It makes a man's heart throb. And when a ray falls into a net, the fisherman's hand quivers when the net comes out of the water or when he pulls on the rope, so he knows that he has caught an electric ray.

THE CROCODILE

This is another animal that is only found in the Nile, in Egypt. Some have claimed that it is also found in the river Mihran, in Sindh. It is very powerful in the water, and grows to a length of twenty cubits and a width of two cubits. It hunts horses and humans, and no animal is capable of killing it except the water buffalo. It has two hands and two feet and a long tail, which it uses to strike and wrap around its prey. It cannot be successfully hunted except by striking it beneath its arms, which is its weak point.

It is said that when the crocodile mates, it emerges from the water with the female and goes up onto the land. The male flips the female onto her back and penetrates her, and when he has finished, he flips her onto her front because she can't do so herself; her arms and legs are too short and her back is too stiff. The female lays her eggs on land, and the ones that fall into the water become crocodiles while the ones that stay on land become skinks. The crocodile can only move its upper jaw, and its tongue is attached to it.

It is said that the crocodile does not have an anus, so when its belly fills up, it comes onto the land and opens its mouth, and a small spotted bird enters it and pecks at the contents of its stomach with its beak, thereby extracting it. This is a source of nourishment for the bird and comfort to the crocodile. On the top of the bird's head is a sharp point; if the crocodile closes its mouth upon the bird, it pricks him and he opens it again.

A poet described it thus:

With a head like a shield, a mouth agape

And teeth like notched blades, or
Saws flashing in a smile
Set inside the rim of its lips, craggy as an ancient well

THE TORTOISE AND THE TURTLE

It is said that the turtle lays its eggs on land, and the ones that remain there are called tortoises while the ones that fall into the water are turtles. The ones that stay on land grow to such a size that a strong man cannot carry them. In the year 700 AH (1300–1301 CE) in Cairo, I saw a tortoise carry a man and walk with him standing on its back.

The ones that go into the water grow to such a size that even a donkey is unable to carry them. Some have been found that weigh four hundred *ratls* (pounds).*

Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī described a turtle thus:

A daughter of the sea, she appeared to us from a distance
Like an island that a sailor might circle
With a head like a snake, and a back
Broad as a shield, and skin like a boulder
As though a druggist's pestle had pounded its perfume
Upon it, burnishing its back with its blows
Fear slices off its head, and when
It feels safe, its head stays put.

THE HIPPO

It has a very large body and the shape of a horse, except that its face is wider, and it has cloven hoofs like a cow. Its tail is like a pig's, and its voice sounds like a horse's. The hippo is only found in the Nile.

The hippo comes out of the water onto the land and grazes upon crops. When it does so, the hippo does not begin eating from the edge [closest to the river], but rather crosses a section containing the amount of food that it wants to eat and begins eating there, so that its face remains pointed toward the river.

The hippo kills the crocodile and dominates it. When Egyptians see the tracks of its hooves on land, they interpret this as a good omen that the Nile will overflow and the land will be fertile. In the year 702 AH (1302–3 CE), a hippo came out onto the land in Giza and ranged far from the river, so it was trapped and killed. The Nubians are great hunters of hippos and make whips out of their hides, which they use to drive camels.

THE SABLE

It is called a water dog and is only found in the Qipchak lands and their bordering territories. It looks like a fox, is red in color, has neither forelegs nor hind legs, and has a long tail. Its head looks like a human head and its face is round. It walks by leaning upon its chest as though it was walking on four legs, and has four testicles: two outside and two inside its body.

If a sable sees hunters trying to catch it for its *jundbidastar*—which are its two external testicles—it bites them off and throws them toward the hunters, because the hunters have no need for a sable without them. If the hunters do not see the severed testicles and continue to pursue the sable, it lies on its back to show them the wound. That way, they know that it has cut them off, and so they leave it alone. When the external testicles are cut off, the internal ones emerge and replace them, and new ones replace the internal ones.

THE BEAVER AND THE ERMINE

The beaver eats fish and plants. It is said that beavers are comprised of masters and servants, and that they establish residences arranged like those of human beings: the masters have raised benches that they sit on in their homes and at their bases are places for the servants. The homes have burrows that go into the ground and doors that open on to the river.

These animals are envious of one another. The masters do not go out and forage for food but rather the servants do so on their behalf. The skin of a master beaver is distinguishable from the skin of a servant by its good color and its luminous quality. The people of the lands [where they are found] remove the snouts of beavers and sables and use them as currency, as long as the king's seal is upon them. The pelts of this animal are used to hem the clothes of princes and the collars of robes of honor.

THE FOURTH BOOK

ON PLANTS

This book covers one of the two kinds of growing things: the partner of the animal kind. In treating this subject, I do not intend to exhaust it or to present its beneficial properties in complete detail, or to encompass it in its entirety. Nor did I set out to achieve this, plunging into such torrents and crossing such perilous territory. That is for several reasons—among them a lack of ability and time—but also because so many have failed at encompassing this subject in the past, including philosophers and sages, famous physicians, desert dwellers and town dwellers, and those who assiduously watch over their plants from the rising of the first rain-foreboding star to the arrival of the morning rain clouds.

Each one of these revealed something that the rest did not and observed something that no one else imagined. The Turcoman knew something that the Bedouin did not, and the mountaineer knew something that the Nabatean did not. The sages wrote long books on this subject, revealing every hidden benefit and characteristic among the useful and harmful properties of plants. Their works grew numerous and famous, and despite all of this, they were not able to contain the subject, perhaps only treating a small portion of it. My intention in presenting it has been to relate literary descriptions by the poets and literary epistles by the eloquent litterateurs, because that is what the attendant of literary gatherings is in need of and depends upon. The scribe benefits from it in his secretaryship, and the epistle writer's means of effective communication are thus broadened.

This is the kind of material that we have presented here, and if we've gone beyond this in certain places, departing from our principal, descriptive, interests by recounting some beneficial and harmful aspects of plants, their cooling and warming natures . . . their generation and origins, their vile and praiseworthy aspects, these additions are all by way of digression and not out of faithfulness to the original purpose.

Vegetables and Foodstuffs

al-Mas'ūdī wrote in *The Meadows of Gold and the Mines of Gems*: “When God placed Adam on the earth, he left Paradise with thirty stems that preserved different kinds of fruit. Ten of them had a husk or peel: walnut, almond, hazelnut, pistachio, acorn, chestnut, pine nut, bitter orange, pomegranate, and poppy. Ten had stones: olive, date, apricot, peach, plum, sorb apple, lotus fruit, jujube, sebesten plum, and medlar. Ten did not have a husk or a stone: apple, quince, pear, grape, fig, citron, carob, mulberry, cucumber, and melon.”

ON FOODSTUFFS AND VEGETABLES

This chapter encompasses wheat, barley, chickpea, broad bean, rice, poppy, flax, hemp seed, melon, cucumber, gourd, eggplant, chard, cauliflower, cabbage, turnip, radish, carrot, onion, garlic, leek, gooseberry, asparagus, wild chicory, mint, watercress, rue, tarragon, spinach, purslane, sorrel, fennel, and celery.

Wheat

The shaykh Abū al-Hasan al-Kisā'ī once said that in the beginning of the world, when the first grain of wheat left Paradise, it was the size of an ostrich's egg, softer than fresh butter, and sweeter than honey. It remained in this pure form during the time of Adam and Seth until the age of Enoch. Then, when the population grew, the size of the grain became smaller, through the days of Pharaoh, growing smaller until the time of the Prophet Elijah. It diminished in size until it became as small as a hen's egg, until the time of Jesus, and then a dove's egg, until John the Baptist was killed, and then it became the size of a hazelnut. That is how it remained until the days of Ezra, and when the Jews said, “Ezra is the Son of God” (Q 9:30), it became the size that it is today. . . .

Wahb ibn Munabbih said: “Crops during the time of Adam were as tall as date palms.”

Avicenna said: “The best wheat is moderately stiff, tall, plump of

stalk, and smooth. It ranges from red to white, while the black variety (buckwheat) is not suitable to eat. Wheat is warming in nature, and moderately moistening and drying. . . . It is slow to digest and causes flatulence; some accompanying sweetness is necessary to make it more readily digestible, while washing the wheat in hot water eases its flatulent properties.”

Barley

Avicenna said: “Barley is cooling and drying in nature . . . and it is less nourishing than wheat. Barley water is more nourishing than barley gruel, and both of them curb the severity of the humors. Barley causes flatulence. If it is cooked in sour vinegar and applied as a poultice on a festering scab, it will heal it. It may also be applied to gout in this way, along with quince and vinegar.”

As for the ways that the poets have described crops and the metaphors they have used . . . Ibn Rāfi‘ said:

Look there at the fields of grain
The south and north winds pass over them
As though they were ocean waves
Rising now, then falling.

Someone else said:

How lovely is the stalk of grain
Appearing to the eye as though
It were a plaited chain
Of amber.

The Chickpea

Avicenna wrote in his *Book of Simple Drugs*: “Chickpeas may be white or red or black or vetch. It is of two types: the cultivated and the wild chickpea. The wild type is stronger in taste, bitterer, and more warming in nature. It has the same strengthening effects as the cultivated chickpea, but the latter is more nourishing. . . . Chickpeas clear up freckles and improve one’s color when they are applied as an ointment or eaten. They are effective against all kinds of boils and lumps, and chickpea ointment may be applied to tetters, while chickpea flour is useful against abominable, cankerous, and itchy scabs. . . . They should not be eaten at the beginning or end of a meal, but only in the middle.”

The Broad Bean

Avicenna said: “It has an Egyptian variety and a Nabatean variety. The Nabatean is more constipating while the Egyptian is moister and less nutritious, with its moistness acting as a laxative. Were it not for the slowness of its digestion and its flatulent properties, it would be as nourishing as barley water. The best kind is the fat white bean that is free of grubs . . . and the best way to prepare it is by soaking it in water for a long time, cooking it thoroughly, and serving it with peppers, salt, asafoetida, and wild thyme. It has a mostly moderate temperament, with a slight inclination toward cooling and drying properties.”

Abū Tālib al-Ma'mūnī described it thus:*

Broad beans luminous
As strings of pearls
Enclosed in vessels
Of green silk
Their insides hidden
Like the waists of maidens
Their edges sharp
As though stolen from vultures
One side a talon
The other, a beak.

Rice

Avicenna said: “It is warming and drying in nature, with its drying properties more apparent than its warming ones.” They say that it is more warming than wheat, and that it is very nourishing. If rice is cooked in milk and almond oil, it is even more nourishing and less drying and constipating, especially if it is soaked overnight. . . . It has cleansing properties, and rice cooked in water is constipating while rice cooked in milk increases sexual potency and is not constipating. I have not come across any poetry on this topic.

Poppy

As for the poppy and what is produced from its secretions, Avicenna said: “The secretion of the black Egyptian poppy is opium. The best of it is heavy, strong-smelling, soft, and easy to dissolve in water. It does not clot when melted nor disintegrate in the sun. The clear, yellow, weak-smelling kind is adulterated and is produced by using *Glaucium* (horned poppy); it may also be adulterated by using the milk of wild lettuce and gum resin, in which case it is very luminous and clear. . . . Opium’s effect is stupefying and it numbs all pain whether it is smoked or applied as an ointment. The dosage is the size of a large

lentil and no more than the weight of four carob grains. It prevents boils and has a drying effect on ulcers, and if applied topically with some milk, it numbs the pain of gout.”

As for its mental effects, it is a soporific, and if it is dissolved into some rose oil along with some myrrh and saffron and a few drops of this solution are placed in the ear, it numbs an earache. It also alleviates migraines and calms painful coughing. It stops diarrhea, soothes itching, and is effective against intestinal ulcers. If opium is not available, it may be replaced by three times its quantity in henbane seeds and double its quantity in mandrake seeds.

The Melon

There are two kinds of melon: orchard melon and wild melon (or colocynth). The best kind is intensely white and supple; the dark and solid ones are unsuitable. Avicenna discussed so many special and beneficial properties of melons that it would require much time to explain. He said: “They are warming in the third degree, while al-Kindī claimed that they were cooling and moist, but he was very wrong.”

The orchard melon comes in three species: Indian, Chinese, and Khurāsānī. The Indian melon is referred to in Egypt as green melon, in the Maghrib as lolling melon, in the Hijāz as *al-jabjab*, and in Syria as *al-zabash*. The Chinese melon is called yellow melon in Egypt and Syria, and the choicest specimens are heavy, coarse-skinned and yellow. A poet described it thus:

Three things improve a melon
Which, in a person, are flaws:
Coarseness, plumpness,
And a natural yellow hue
When you split it open one day you'll find in it
Two full moons, soon to ripen into crescents

The Khurāsānī melon is the one with the long and crooked neck, and it's called the 'Abdalī melon in Egypt, in reference to 'Abd Allāh ibn Tāhir, for he was the one who brought it to Egypt from Khorasan.

A doctor has counted another species of melon, and it is pleasing in shape, sweet-smelling, speckled in red, yellow, and black. There are some that are palm-size and others that are larger and longer. They are called in Iraq *al-Dastanbuwī* . . . and in Syria *al-Shammām*. And in Upper Egypt they call it the mandrake, but this is a mistake because the mandrake is a different species. There is another species of yellow melon in Upper Egypt that they call the winter melon, and it is elongated, not dry, and looks like a cucumber with very thin skin. They generally slice it with a knife, but sometimes they suck on it so

as to extract its inside and leave the skin like an empty vessel. I've mostly seen this type of melon in Isnā, in the province of Qūs.

As for literary descriptions and images of melons, a poet said of a green melon:

He reached over to a melon and split it open
And divided it among all of his friends
Like shards of crystal set in topaz
Inlaid with carnelian stones

And another poet described a yellow melon thus:

The servant boy came to us with a melon
And a polished knife
In a flash, he had sliced the forenoon sun into pieces
And passed a crescent moon to each

Abū l-Fath Kushājim described it thus:*

You, who plucks the melon from its vine,
You harvest the fruit of praise.
Before you brought it to me
I'd never smelled fragrances purer than ambergris.
With a skin coarser than a hedgehog's
And flesh softer than butter
It's as though the knife reveals it to be
Saffron mixed with honey

Eggplant

Ibn Wahshiyya wrote in his book *The Moon's Secrets*, on its generation: "If you would like to grow eggplants, take the two testicles of a ram and the roots of an eggplant bush. Put the roots on top of the testicles after you have put the latter in the ground, and then place one of the ram's kidneys on top of the roots, and bury them with earth. After four weeks, an eggplant bush will sprout, and when it does, move it to a different place for it to grow." This is what he said about its generation, and God knows best.

Avicenna said: "It produces black bile and cataracts, and it taints one's coloring and makes it yellowish, darkening the face and leaving red spots on it. It also produces cancers, elephantiasis, headaches, and halitosis. It also leads to blockages of the liver and spleen, but eggplant cooked in vinegar sometimes relieves liver blockages."

Cabbage

Ibn Wahshiyya said, of the generation of cabbage: "If you would like

to grow cabbage, take four goat hooves and soak them in lard three times, then put them in the ground. Cover them with the hair from a billy goat's beard,* then bury everything in sand and throw some soil on top. Cabbage will grow from it.”

Avicenna said: “The root of a cabbage is moister in nature than its leaves, and wild cabbage is more warming and drying [than garden cabbage], but all cabbage is warming in the first degree and drying in the second. There are different species of cabbage including orchard cabbage, sea cabbage, and wild cabbage. . . . Wild cabbage is more bitter and sharper in taste and less suitable to serve as a source of nourishment. Cooking cabbage hearts in pomegranate juice is delicious.”

Radish

Ibn Wahshiyya said, on its generation: “If you would like to grow radishes, take two goat horns and soak them in human urine for seven days. Then plant them in the ground and sprinkle a little asafoetida on top of them. Water them with rainwater every day, and you will have radishes after twenty-one days.”

Avicenna said: “It is effective against viper bites, and radish juice is good for scorpion stings, and radish seeds may be used against various venoms. If one puts a slice of radish on a scorpion, it will die . . . and if a scorpion stings someone who has eaten radish, he will not be harmed.”

Carrot

Ibn Wahshiyya said, on its generation: “If you take the horns of a boar and slather them with oil, and place a piece of camel dung on the sharp ends of the two horns and bury them in the ground, from that will grow good sweet carrots.”

Avicenna said: “Dioscorides said that there is a species of carrot with leaves smaller than the leaves of the fennel, but with the same shape. Its stalk is a handspan in length, and its blossom is yellow, and the top of it looks like coriander or garden dill. Its fruit is white and sharp-tasting, pleasant to smell and to chew. A second kind looks like celery and is pungent and spicy, with a sweet smell. A third kind has leaves like cilantro with a white blossom and a head and fruit that look like dill.”

As for the *shaqāqul*, it is a kind of wild carrot, it is more rousing in sexual potency than the domestic carrot, and it also helps with bowel movements and serves as a diuretic. I saw a note in the margins of the manuscript of Avicenna's *Book of Simple Drugs* that I was copying, by someone who was correcting the sage's words, something along the

lines of: “Carrots have two kinds: domestic and wild. The kind that Dioscorides here considered best is called *dūqū*, and it has three types, and they are not kinds of carrots. When Avicenna mixed them all together, he also mixed up their beneficial properties.”

Onion

Avicenna said that it is warming in the third degree, and it has a moistening aftereffect. . . . When onions are eaten, they are beneficial against ailments related to excessive moisture. Onions make one’s face red, and their seeds make dandruff go away. If rubbed on bald spots, they are very effective at preventing hair loss. When used with salt, they are good for uprooting warts, and onion water is good for pus-filled ulcers. When mixed with chicken fat, it is good for tender soles. If its water is injected into the nose, it clears out the head, and may be dripped into one’s ear to alleviate headache and ringing in the ears, and also pus in the ears.

Ibn Wakī’ described an onion in verse:

Its ruddy peel reflects your bloodshot eyes
As you stop just to think of it
Thin red nightgowns on tender, pale
Greek-like bodies.

Garlic

Avicenna said: “Among the kinds of garlic are the well-known cultivated type, and also the leek garlic, and wild garlic. This latter is bitter and constricting; it is known as snake viper. Leek garlic has a complex of properties taken from garlic and leeks; it is warming and drying in the third and fourth degrees, and wild garlic is more so. Garlic has alleviating properties and is good against flatulence, but causes ulcers on the skin. It is useful for treating conditions caused by a change in the properties of water.”*

A poet described it thus:

How lovely is a head of garlic in the hands of a cook,
Whose beauty captures the heart of any who look upon her!
I saw her handling it in wonder
Like a purse of fine Egyptian linen, full of pearls*

Trees and Fruit

ON TREES WHOSE FRUIT HAS A SKIN OR HUSK

This chapter includes the almond, walnut, hazelnut, pistachio, chestnut, pine nut, pomegranate, banana, orange, and lemon.

The Almond

Avicenna said: “The sweet almond is moderately moist, while the bitter almond is hot and dry in the second degree. As for its properties, all types of almonds have cleansing, purifying, and laxative properties, but the sweet almond is weaker than the bitter as a laxative because it acts as a blood thinner. Almond oil is lighter in weight than the fruit itself. The bitter almond is beneficial against freckles and other facial marks and also reduces facial spasms. Bitter almond root may be cooked and placed upon freckles and will act as a strong medicine against them.”

Eating sweet almonds is fattening. . . . If the juice of bitter almonds is consumed before drinking wine, it prevents drunkenness.

The Walnut

Avicenna said: “It is hot, and its theriac is called *al-Sakanjabīn* and may be used for feverish patients. For those with weak stomachs, walnut jam in vinegar is good. It is hot in the second degree and dry in the first, and its dryness is less than its heat. It also has a heavy moistness that dissipates when it ages. As for its effects and properties, fried walnuts are constricting, as are its leaves and peel with respect to the blood. Its scorched peel is drying without burning, and its aged oil is like old olive oil. . . . Walnut resin is beneficial against hot ulcers when sprinkled upon them or applied in a poultice plaster. . . . It is said that walnuts make the tongue heavy and fill the mouth with sores.”

The Hazelnut

Avicenna said: “It tends to be hot and slightly dry, and is more

constricting than the walnut. The hazelnut causes flatulence, producing gases in the stomach. If it is fried and eaten with a little bit of pepper, it clears up rheum.” Hippocrates said: “Hazelnuts increase the size of one’s brain, and when eaten with honey water they are beneficial against persistent coughs. They are slow to digest and cause vomiting, and are beneficial against stings; when taken with figs and rue, they may be used against scorpion stings.”

The Pistachio

On the generation of pistachios, Ibn Wahshiyya wrote: “If you would like a pistachio tree, take the kidney of a goat and slice it open. Bury within it a bone from the spine of a peacock and sprinkle some fumewort over it and put it in the ground. After twenty-seven days, a pistachio tree will grow from it.” Avicenna said: “It is hotter than the walnut, and it is a dry heat in the last phase of the second degree. It also has some moistness, and some have claimed that it is cold, but they are mistaken. The pistachio opens up obstructions in the liver because of its bitterness and fragrance. It contains little nourishment. It is good, however, for the bowels, particularly the Syrian variety, which looks like the pine nut.”

Abū Ishāq al-Sābī described the pistachio thus:

While snacking on young moist pistachios
Just beginning to show signs of dryness
I describe them as a philosopher might
With pleasant and charming words
An emerald wrapped in silk
Enclosed in an ivory vessel

The Pomegranate

Avicenna said: “Sweet pomegranates are cold and moist in the first degree. Sour pomegranates are dry in the second degree, and they repress jaundice. They also prevent the flow of liquids to the bowels. They have cleansing and constricting properties. Pomegranate kernels in honey are effective against whitlow and ugly ulcers, and their flowers are beneficial against various wounds, not limited to burning ones. Sweet pomegranate is a purgative.”

The Banana

Avicenna said: “Bananas are a purgative, and eating a lot of them leads to blockages (in the bowels), yellow bile, and phlegm, depending on one’s temperament. It is beneficial for the throat and the

chest and heavy on the bowels. Those with hot temperaments should have a draft of oxymel after eating it, while those with cold temperaments should have honey.* Bananas increase sperm production, they agree with the kidneys, and make the urine flow copiously.”

Al-Sāhib Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Zāfir described a banana in verse:*

It is as though the bananas
Which I regard in wonder
Were the tusks of small elephants
Coated in gold

The honorable shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn Mansūr al-Dimyātī—who was known as Ibn al-J‘Abbās—recited to me the following poem in the month of Dhū al-Hijja 713 (March 1314 CE):

It is as though the bananas
Ripening in the trees
Were the plaits of hair on the head of a songstress
Braided after gathering them together
And the one who gathered and braided them
Added a tassel on their end*

The Orange

Ibn al-Mutazz described it thus:

Yellow engulfed in red
Aflame, the orange appears
Like the cheek of one who spotted her lover
Then blanched and reddened, afraid of being seen. . . .

ON TREES WHOSE FRUIT HAS A STONE

This chapter includes ten species: the date palm and those trees that resemble it (such as the coconut palm, the areca palm, the pandanus palm, and the doum palm), the olive, carob, plum, wild cherry, azarole, peach, apricot, jujube, and lote tree.

The Date Palm

God Most High said of it: “And lofty palm trees with ranged clusters, as sustenance for God’s servants, and thereby We revived a land that was dead. Thus will be the Resurrection.” (Q 50:10–11) And ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar reported that the Prophet of God once said: “Among

the trees, there is one that never loses its leaves and is like a Muslim; tell me what it is.” So the people began to think about the various trees of the desert.

“It occurred to me that it was the date palm,” recounted ‘Abd Allāh, “but I was too shy to speak up.” Then they said “Tell us what it is, oh Prophet of God.” And he replied: “It is the date palm.” So I told my father (‘Umar, the second caliph) about what had occurred to me, and he said: “If only you had spoken up, that would have been very pleasing to me.”

al-Sha‘bī reported that the Byzantine emperor wrote to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb, saying: * “My envoys have informed me that there is a tree in your land that looks like a man standing upright. It cleaves apart from the spathe, with leaves that resemble donkey ears, and bears fruit that look like pearls at first, then emeralds, then rubies and topaz. Then the fruit softens and it is more delicious than the best sweetmeats. Then the dates dry and become a source of protection for the sedentary, and a source of provisions for the traveler. If my envoys have spoken truthfully, then this is surely the tree that sprouted for Mary, the daughter of Imrān (and the mother of Jesus).”

‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb wrote back to him and said: “Your envoys have spoken truthfully. This is the date palm, which sprouted for Mary, so fear God and do not take Jesus to be a deity besides God.” *

As for the unripe, ripening, and dry dates, it was reported that the Prophet of God once said: “Whosoever eats seven ‘Ajwa dates for breakfast will not be harmed that day by poison or magic.” *

Avicenna said: “Both unripe and dried dates are cool and dry in the second degree, but unripe dates are more constricting than dried dates. If one drinks water after eating them, they cause gas, and dates that have begun to sweeten cause grumbling noises in the bowels.”

The Olive

Avicenna said that the olive provides little nourishment and that the leaves of the wild olive are effective against whitlow and prevents perspiration when rubbed against the skin. The resin of the wild olive is effective against ulcerous scabs and tetter, night blindness and premature graying. It clears up the whites of the eyes and the pus of its sties, and it also extracts the stillborn fetus.

The salted water of olives may be administered by clyster to treat sciatica, and olive oil leaves can be cooked in verjuice until the mixture becomes like honey, and is then smeared onto the teeth, for which it is beneficial. The pressed leaves produce a juice that can be used for bulging eyes. . . . Large salted olives help rouse sexual appetite and strengthen the gut, and it produces a constipating gastric

juice. Olives in vinegar are the easiest and quickest to digest.

Ibn Wakī' described the olive thus:

Consider the olives
That heal all souls
They appear to me like eyes
Of deepest bluish black, wide and dark
The green among them like emeralds
The black, like coal

The Plum

Avicenna said: "The garden plum is stronger than the black plum, and the yellow plum is stronger than the red. Large white plums are heavy and do not have much of a laxative effect. Armenian plums are the sweetest of all and the strongest laxative among them. The best plums are large and fleshy. They are cold in the beginning of the second degree and moist at the end of it." With regard to its properties, the gum resin (of the plum tree) is diluting and thinning in nature and may be used as a glue. According to Dioscorides, the Damascus plum is constricting and constipating. Galen said that the unripe plum is constricting and not very nutritious. Plums should be eaten before the meal, and the supple man should drink some honey water and wine after eating plums.

A poet described it thus:

It is as though the plum, for its dye
Stole the color of heart blood.
It could not be mistaken, in color and comely form
And in sweet fragrance,
For pieces of gathered amber
Or beads lathed from jet

The Peach

The Syrians refer to it as *al-durāqin*. Avicenna said: "Peaches are cold in the first phase of the second degree, and moist in the first degree except for its last phase. Its moistness is quick to spoil. It is a laxative with some constricting properties. The most constricting is the dried variety, which prevents diarrhea. The unripe fruit is also constricting. If some drops of the extract of its leaves are put in the ear, they kill earworms. When used as an ointment, it is effective against hot and cold migraines and earaches."

The ripe peach is good for the stomach and increases one's appetite for food. It should not be eaten after anything else, for it will spoil the

food it follows. Rather, it should be eaten before the meal. Dried peach is slow to digest and not very nourishing. When the navel is dressed with a poultice of peach leaves, this kills 'Abdominal worms, and the same goes for drinking the extract of its flowers or leaves. Ripe peaches act as a laxative, and unripe ones are constipating. Some say that peaches increase sexual appetite, but it may be that this is only the case in people with hot temperaments.

As for poetic descriptions of the peach, one poet said of it:

The peach is a wonder to behold
There is nothing like it in all creation
It is as though it were the cheek of the beloved
Having been stung by fleas.

Abū Bakr ibn al-Qurtubiyya described it thus:

Sweet-smelling, it returned in August,
Visiting me in the clothes of a Bedouin
In a velvet robe, its sovereignty over all fruits
Has no deficiency or blemish
I glanced at it and it blushed bashfully
Then turned away from me in suspicion
One whose name reads the same backward and forward
It exceeds even the almond in the finery of its cloaks*

The Apricot

Avicenna said: "The best apricots are Armenian, for they are not quick to spoil or sour. When you eat apricots, you should have them with some one or two dirhams' worth of mastic or anise, mixed with pure wine, raisin wine, or honey wine. Apricots are cold and moist in the second degree, and the oil of their stones is hot and dry in the second degree. The humor an apricot produces is quick to spoil. It abates one's thirst, and its oil is beneficial against hemorrhoids. It causes fevers as a result of its rapid spoiling. The water in which dried apricots are soaked is beneficial against high fevers."

Ibn Wakī' described it thus:

Apricots appeared in the trees,
Ablaze like flame
Like green royal pavilions
Bedecked with gold-burnished bells

And Ibn Mutazz said:

And from the apricot tree appeared the most wondrous of wonders

Tempting one with pleasure and ecstasy
As though, in the branches of the great tree there appeared
Hazelnuts molded from pure gold.

ON TREES WHOSE FRUITS HAVE NEITHER SKIN NOR STONE*

This chapter comprises eight species: grape, fig, mulberry, apple, quince, pear, mandrake, and citron.

The Grape

Avicenna said: “A white grape is more praiseworthy than a black grape if they are otherwise equally matched in terms of their juiciness, sweetness, and so on. Grapes that have been set aside for two or three days after being cut from the vine are better than freshly cut grapes. As for their nature, their peel is cold, dry, and slow to digest. Their flesh is hot and moist, while their seed is cold and dry. Freshly cut grapes cause gas, while grapes that are hung up until their skins dry are very nourishing and fortify the stomach. Grapes provide a similar type of nourishment to the fig, insofar as they have few vile properties and many nutritious ones, even if they are not quite as nutritious as the fig. . . . Eating grapes whole is more nutritious than drinking their juice; however, the juice is quicker to act and to be digested. The raisin is the friend of the liver and the bowels.”

The Fig

A wise Muslim sage whose word is respected and who is deemed trustworthy once told me about a kind of black fig found in Alexandria, which is called *al-Ghurābī*. When the figs ripen, they become covered in white markings, and sometimes one may be found that has the name of God written upon it. He also informed me that he had seen many such figs, and that he had been told by trustworthy people that some figs even had the phrase “There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God” written upon them. I asked him if it was possible that this could be the result of someone’s trickery, and he said, “No. This is a natural creation produced by God Most High.” Praise be to He who is capable of all things!

Avicenna said: “The best figs are the white ones, followed by the red and then the black. The ripest figs are the best, and they have almost no harmful properties at all. Dried figs have praiseworthy effects, except that the blood it produces is not so good unless it is consumed with walnuts, and then its chyme becomes better. . . . Figs are more nourishing than all other fruits, and the juice of their leaves has

powerful properties of heating and cleansing. It also has a beneficial purgative quality that prevents the putrefaction of the skin.”

Ibrāhīm ibn Khafāja wrote (describing figs gathered in the morning):

Dark, the color of mountains
They laugh at the frowning gloom
Then, as the forenoon light breaks
They are freckles in the morning's face
It is as though I were gathering, in the morning
The small breasts of Abyssinian girls

As for how figs have been described by way of censure, there is this poem by Muhammad ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī:

I do not welcome the fig when it appears
Dark as the night, in its thin shawl
A torn robe that appears to us to resemble
The wounded head of an African.

The Mulberry

Avicenna said: “There are two kinds of mulberry. One is the sweet mulberry, which resembles the fig in its manner of ripening, except that it is less nutritious, more corrupting and less productive of blood, and worse for the bowels. As for the sour type, it is known as Syrian mulberry, and most of what we have to say will be about this species. The sweet kind is hot and moist, while the sour Syrian type inclines toward the cold and moist. Mulberries are constricting and cooling, and their juice is also constricting, particularly if it is cooked in a brass vessel.”

As for descriptions of mulberry, Muhammad ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī described it thus:

Look at the mulberry in the orchards
Which the gardener brings us in a silver cup
Their juices looking like the bloody wounds
Of the sons of Ham.

The Apple

Avicenna said: “The best apples are Syrian. The tasteless ones are vile and have little in the way of beneficial properties, and the same goes for the unripe fruit, which is acrid and constricting in nature, while the sour fruit is cold and heavy. The sweet fruit is juicy and more hot than other types, even though most apples are cold in nature, and

there are many different types. . . . Aged apple juice is better than fresh juice, because of the dissolution of vile gases. . . . Apples strengthen the heart, especially the sweet Syrian kind. Grilled apples in dough are beneficial against a lack of sexual appetite; they also are effective against ‘Abdominal worms and dysentery.’”

Ibn al-Mutazz described it thus:

A red and green apple, fresh
Anointed all over with sweet fragrance
Beauty has reached perfection in it, as though
It was a rosy cheek beside a dark mustache.

The Pear

Avicenna said: “In my country, there is a type of pear called king pear (*shāh ‘Amrūd*), which is very fleshy, round, thin-skinned, beautifully colored, as sweet as thickened sugar water, and has a very fragrant smell. When it falls from the tree to the ground, these properties dissipate. This type of pear has no harmful properties. . . . The type of pear known as the Chinese is cold in the first degree and dry in the second, while king pear is moderately moist. . . . All types of pear are constricting and are used in bandages that prevent the flow of fluids. They also have mild cleansing properties. As for the king pear that is found exclusively in Khorasan, its softening properties produce good chyme. The Chinese pear particularly strengthens the stomach, quenches thirst, and relieves bile. It also causes constipation, particularly the dried variety. The pear possesses the special property of causing colic, so one should drink spiced honey water after eating it.”

As for the way that poets have described it, among them is this verse from Zāfir al-Hadd‘ād al-Iskandari:

By God, the Provider of such a pear, reminding me
Of what I used to behold in my earliest days
I bring it to my mouth and reckon it
A breast, delicious to bite and kiss
Its taste nearly overwhelms me
Like the hasty kiss of a beloved
I cherish her brief visit; if only it would last longer!
If only she were not so detached during her stay!
If I ruled the earth, it would not bear forth
A plant besides this one, on mountain or plain.

Aromatic Plants

ON AROMATIC PLANTS THAT MAY BE DISTILLED

These include four species: the rose, the wild rose, the Egyptian willow, and the water lily.

The Rose

The rose has many colors, the most famous of which are red and white. The author of *Chewing the Cud of Conversation* (al-Tanūkhī) said that he once saw a yellow rose and a jet-black rose with a fragrant smell.* He also saw a rose in Basra that was half dark red and half snow white, and it looked as though the border between the two halves had been drawn by a pen. Then there are roses with multicolored petals, such that one side is red and the other is white. It has been said that sometimes a rose may be found with red and yellow petals. There are also blue roses, but people say that this color is produced through trickery, by watering a rosebush with white flowers using water mixed with indigo dye, which turns the petals blue. It may also be that black roses are produced in this way, and God knows best.

One of the proofs that testify to the existence of such colors is that the poets described them in their poems, mentioning the yellow, the blue, and the black, as we have indicated below.

Avicenna said: “Roses have an essence that is a combination of moist and earthy. They have some heat and constricting properties, bitterness, and a little sweetness. . . .” Galen said that the rose is not particularly cold in relation to the human body, and that it was cold in the first degree. Avicenna said that the rose’s drying properties were stronger than its constricting properties because it is more bitter than constricting in taste. . . . When roses are used in the bath, they remove the foul smell of perspiration. A washing lotion may be formed out of roses for this purpose by taking 40 *mithqāls* (6 oz.) of roses that have not been touched by dew and leaving them until they wither, along with 5 *mithqāls* (.75 oz.) of Indian spikenard and 6 *mithqāls* (.9 oz.) of myrrh, and forming this combination into small

pastilles.* Sometimes people add a couple dirhams of costus and iris to the mixture, and women often string these pastilles around their neck to fight the smell of sweat. Sleeping on a bed of rose petals reduces sexual desire.

This is what Avicenna has said about roses. As for what I have personally verified, the yellow rose may be dried and ground up with salt and serves as a good medicine for wounds, healing them quickly.

As for the way that roses have been described in poetry and prose, al-‘Imād al-Isfahānī wrote the following:

I said to a rose, why do your thorns make
All of the wounds I have treated bleed again?
It said to me: all of these sweet-smelling blossoms are soldiers,
I am their sultan, and my thorns are my weapons

As for the way it has been described by way of censure, Ibn al-Rūmī wrote the following:

O you who praise the rose, how wrong you are!
Do you not see it in the hand of the one who plucked it?
Resembling the asshole of a mule, as it puckers
To shit, with dung soiling its middle

Egyptian Willow

Avicenna said: “Its seed is larger than a chickpea, whitish in color, and it has an oily and smooth pulp. It is hot in the third degree and dry in the second. It has cleansing properties, especially its pulp. It is effective against thick humors, and it dissolves blockages in the bowels when taken with vinegar. . . . Its seed is effective against skin spots, freckles, red blotches, and leprosy.”

Water Lily

Galen referred to the water lily as the water cabbage, and its seeds are called seeds of the bride (cubeb), and they are somewhat sweet. Avicenna said that Indian water lily has the same effects as mandrake root, and the most powerful type of water lily has a white root. Its seeds are stronger in their effects than its grains.

Gum Resins, Mannas, and Saps

ON GUM RESINS

These include camphor, yellow amber, pistachio resin, mastic, turpentine, carob resin, colchicum, tragacanth, frankincense, euphorbia, aloe, myrrh, terebinth, *Balsamodendron playfairii*, *Ferula asafoetida*, artichoke gum, galbanum, devil's dung, sarcocolla, sagapenum, chestnut resin, blood of the two brothers, storax, gum arabic, and pine resin.

Camphor

This is the most noble of all resins and the most entitled to be placed first in the list because of its prevalence in various types of compound medicines and fragrances. It is said that it is a type of resin from a tree found on riverbanks, so large that it shades one hundred men. It is found in the land of India. The merchants claim that a single tree contains several varieties of camphor, and they treat each one of them separately.

There are certain places where camphor is typically found. Among them is Fansūr, which is an island that is seven hundred *farsakhs* in perimeter and is known as the Land of Gold. The camphor that comes from there is the finest of all types. Another place that camphor is found is called Arbashīr, and also al-Zābaj. The camphor from there is the worst kind.

It is said that the method of collecting camphor involves approaching the tree at a specific time in the year and digging a trench around it. A large vessel is then placed in the trench, and a man with a large ax comes forward, wearing a cloth over his mouth and nose. He places the vessel firmly against the root of the tree, and then he strikes the tree with a great blow. He then flings the ax from his hand and runs away fearing that the camphor will gush forth out of the tree and into his face, which would kill him. Following that blow, the vessel placed near the root of the tree collects the camphor that emerges from the tree. Once it dries in the vessel, the camphor is split up into smaller jars, and the tree is cut down.

Some say that camphor is harvested from trees in dense thickets on the slopes of mountains, several days' journey from the sea. Tigers frequent those thickets, and no human enters them to collect the camphor out of fear of the tigers, except at a certain time of the year—namely, the mating season of these animals. When they become aroused, they grow ill, and so the males and the females leave the thickets and walk to the seashore in order to heal themselves in the seawater for a month. That is the time when the camphor may be collected. It is said that were it not for this circumstance, camphor would be in far greater supply.

Avicenna said: "Camphor is cold and dry in the third degree, and using it quickens the advent of gray hair. It prevents hot swellings and when mixed with vinegar or the juice of unripe dates, myrtle water, or sweet basil water, it prevents nosebleeds. It helps to heal burning headaches and strengthens the senses of the feverish. It diminishes sexual desire and creates kidney and bladder stones."

Yellow Amber

This is called the lantern of the Greeks. 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Baytār said: * "He who claims that yellow amber is the resin of the white poplar is not correct." Yellow amber has two types: one that is imported from the lands of the Byzantines and the East, and another that is found in the western parts of al-Andalus, on the coast and underground. It is also found in the oases of Egypt.

Avicenna said: "Yellow amber is slightly hot in temperament and dry in the third degree. It is constricting, preventing bleeding wherever it may occur. Some believe that it is beneficial when applied to hot swellings. Yellow amber prevents nosebleeds, and a dose of half a *mithqāl* (.07 oz.) may be mixed with cold water and drunk to treat heart palpitations."

Pistachio Resin*

This is the resin of the pistachio tree, which is extracted, like all other resins, by slashing the tree in various places, and the resin flows from it and is collected and dried in the sun. Its color is a pale white, and it tastes somewhat bitter.

Mastic

This is also known as *al-mustakā* (*Pistacia lentiscus*) . . . and the best kind is white and pure. It is red in its liquid form, or white. The yellow kind is inferior to the previous two.

Terebinth Resin*

This is also known as the resin of the tree of the green seeds, and it is imported from the Maghrib, Palestine, and Syria, and the adjacent territories. Ibn al-Baytār said: “There are different kinds of resins. The best is mastic, followed by terebinth resin, and then by the resin of the thorny carob.”

Tragacanth

Abū Hanīfa al-Dīnawārī said: * “It is the resin of the tragacanth tree, a thorny tree found in Khorasan.” It is also found in the mountains overlooking Tripoli, in Syria. I saw it growing on Mount Hermon. It grows in dense tangles, not rising more than half a cubit in length above the ground.

Frankincense

This is also called *lubbān* (olibanum). “Frankincense” (*kundur*) is a Persian word. It is only found in al-Shihr, in Yemen, and its tree is no taller than a couple of cubits tall. It grows in the mountains, and its leaves are like the leaves of the myrtle tree, and so is its fruit. It is bitter to the taste, and its resin appears wherever it is chopped with axes.

Aloe

Its leaves are similar to the leaves of the squill, and it has a secretion that is sticky to the touch. On the two edges of every leaf is a kind of thorn that is short and split-ended, with a single root. This tree grows plentifully in India and also in the Maghrib. It is said that there are three types of aloe: the Socotran, the Arabic, and the Siminjani. It is said that it resembles the green elecampane except that the leaves of the aloe plant are longer, wider, and thicker. It contains a lot of fluid, and the plants are put into presses and then struck with wood and trodden over by foot until all of the juice flows out of them. Then it is left until it thickens, whereupon it is placed in leather skins and placed in the sun until it dries out. The best kind is the aloe from Socotra, which is an island near the coast of Yemen.

Myrrh

This is the resin of a tree found in the lands of the Maghrib, which looks like a tree that is called the Egyptian thorn tree in Greek. Incisions are made in it from which the resin is extracted, and it flows onto mats that have been made specifically for this purpose.

Abū Hanīfa al-Dīnawārī said: “It is like the frankincense tree and is found on a mountain called Qahwān, in Oman. This is a white resin that is used to wash clothes, and it cleans them just like soap. The tree has seeds like the myrtle’s, black in color, which burn the tongue.”

Artichoke Gum

It is also called *kankar zad*, and it is the resin of the artichoke, which is also called dog’s lettuce. It grows on the banks of rivers and canals, and it has some dispersed thorns upon it.

Devil’s Dung

This is the resin of the asafoetida, and it is of two types: one is white and edible, and the other is black and has a vile smell. Abū Hanīfa al-Dīnawārī said: “It grows in the sandy ground between Bust and the lands of al-Qīqān. Devil’s dung is extracted from the stems of its leaves by making incisions in them.”

Blood of the Two Brothers*

It is also called the Dripping, and Abū Hanīfa al-Dīnawārī said: “It is a red resin that is imported from the island of Socotra, and it is called the Red (*al-ayda*), Dragon’s Blood, and Snake Blood. It is said that it is the gum of a large tree found in India and is well-known there.”

Gum Arabic

This is the resin of the acacia tree, and it is used exclusively in compounds and is not suitable for anything else. That is because it dissolves in water very quickly without clotting, while other resins that are gathered from flowering trees will corrupt a compound when they are added to it, such as sumac resin, rue resin, and marshmallow resin. Of the other resins sometimes commonly referred to as gum arabic, there is also plum resin, *dāmīthā* resin (a tree in the lands of Fārs), almond resin, wild and domestic olive resin—the wild olive resin has the color of scammony, and is sometimes red—and cypress resin.

KINDS OF MANNA

These include honey, wax, lac wax, kermes, labdanum, dodder,

kamala, Yemeni yellow dye, Persian manna, siracost, manna (*mann*), *Cuscuta*, and sugar of gigantic swallow-wort.

Honey

Al-Tamīmī wrote in his *Guide*:* “Honey is a kind of manna that falls from heaven in every land and every clime of the inhabited realms. It falls upon many kinds of flowers, blossoms, and leaves, and it is gathered by the bees who have been inspired by God to collect it and place it in their hives, which are their residences. This is called the honeycomb, and the bees store it for their own sustenance during the winter, when they cannot fly, besieged as they are by rain and snow.” Many of the philosophers and doctors have claimed that the wax the bees use to form their residences, raise their young within, and store their honey is itself a kind of manna that falls from heaven. God knows best.

Aromatics, Sexual Medicines, and the Magical Properties of Nature

ON MUSK AND ITS VARIETIES

Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Kh‘Alil ibn Sa‘id al-Tamīmī al-Maqdisī wrote in his book entitled *The Bride’s Collar and the Sweet Scent of Souls*:* “There are many types and different varieties of musk. The finest kind is Tibetan musk, which is brought from a place called Dhū Samt, two months’ journey from Tibet. The musk is taken from there to Tibet, and then to Khorasan.”

Musk comes from a four-legged beast that resembles a small gazelle. We discussed the musk gazelle in the third chapter of the second section of the third book, which is in the ninth volume of this work, so there is no need to repeat it here. We will recount, though, what has been said about the method of extracting the musk from this animal.

Some have claimed that God created these beasts to be producers of musk. They bear forth this product each year, and it is a by-product of the blood that gathers in the navel pouch at a certain time. . . . When the musk pouch becomes swollen and enlarged, the gazelles fall ill and suffer until the swelling reaches its completion, and at that point, the gazelles scratch at their pouches with their hoofs until they drop off. Then the musk importers come out into the desert and take the fallen pouches.

Muhammad ibn al-‘Abbās said: “The best musk is Sogdian. It is bought by the merchants of Khorasan in Tibet, and transported overland to Khorasan, then from Khorasan to the farthest horizons. Below the Sogdian variety is Indian musk, which originates in Tibet and is taken to India and then to Daybul, then by sea to Sirāf, Aden, Oman, and other places. It is beneath Sogdian musk in quality, and Indian musk is followed by Chinese musk, which is inferior to it because of the length of time it spends at sea and the spoilage of its odor that befalls it. The inferiority of Chinese musk is also due to another reason, namely the different pasturage at the source. The best musk comes from gazelles that graze upon a type of herb called *al-kadahmas*, which grows in Tibet and Kashmir, or in one or the other.

Ahmad ibn Abī Ya‘qūb reported that the name of this herb was *al-kandahsa*.^{*} The second-best kind of pasturage for this animal is Indian spikenard. . . . It grows abundantly in India and Tibet, and the animals that graze upon it have musk that is of a middle tier, beneath the first kind. The lowest quality of musk is from animals that graze upon an herb called marum, which has a smell like musk but not quite as strong or fragrant.”

ON AROMATIC WOODS, THEIR TYPES AND SOURCES^{*}

Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tamīmī said: “My father reported to me, on the authority of his own father, who had heard from a group of scholars knowledgeable about the subject of aromatic wood, that it comes from large trees found in India. These trees are the sources of this product, and they are also found in inland Kashmir, Sarandīb, and Khmer (Cambodia), and the surrounding territories. They said that it does not acquire an odor until after it has been aged, hewn, and stripped of its bark. Once its bark is removed and it is dried, it is then sent out to every locale.”

Al-Tamīmī said: “I was told by one scholar that this wood comes from the heart of the tree, and that not all of the tree constitutes this particular type of wood. It is much like the heart of the ebony tree, the jujube, the olive, and other trees whose heartwood is oily and exterior wood is white and free of oil.”

Muhammad ibn al-‘Abbās said: “I was told by a group of people from al-Ubulla that the kind of aromatic wood known as Indian wood (*agallocha*) is found in valleys between lofty, rugged mountains that are impassible to humans because of their harsh terrain. The wood is found in dense forests within those valleys. When the trees fall, after a long lifespan, they rot in the rain and floods, and the outer wood is eaten away by the soil, the water, and the air, leaving only the pure, essential heartwood. When the rains increase, the floods take that wood away from the valleys and into the ocean, where it is cast out onto the shore by the waves, and the people gather it and take it away.”

As for the types and sources of aromatic wood, there are many different kinds. The best and most valuable is Mandali wood, which is the Indian variety. (It is called Mandali in reference to its place of origin.) They say that it is imported from three places in India, and the best kind is from Khmer, which is a mountainous part of India.

This is a rare wood, which can only be found at certain times. It is a very moist wood, deeply black in color, dense, and containing a lot of water. Al-Husayn ibn Yazīd al-Sīrāfī wrote in his *Reports on India*:

“People journey for three months carrying the finest Indian and Khmerian wood to the idol known as Multan—which is near al-Mansūra. Indians go to great trouble to bring this wood to the idol, and they give it to the temple keepers to burn it as incense for the idol. The Khmerian wood is worth two hundred dinars per *mann** and is sometimes stamped with (an indication of its value), and the stamp leaves an imprint because of the suppleness of the wood. The merchants sometimes buy the wood from the temple keepers. When the Muslims conquered Multan, they removed the idol and smashed it, and found a lot of this wood beneath it, which they seized.

ON THE PRODUCTION OF FRAGRANCES MADE WITH MUSK AND AROMATIC WOODS

With regard to the production of musk-based fragrances, al-Zahrāwī wrote in his book: * “This subject has three parts: the first has to do with the time that such a fragrance is produced; the second relates to the tools that may be used to produce it; and the third is about the manner of its production.

“With regard to the time that it may be made, this is at the beginning of dawn, before the sun rises, because of the stillness of the air at this time. If it so happens to be springtime, then so much the better. One must be careful not to do this at a time when the wind is high, but rather when it has died down.

“As for the tools that may be used to make a musk-based fragrance and to crush its ingredients, the best way to pound musk is in a mortar of pure gold or glass, with a glass pestle. Amber should be melted in a stone cavity or a golden flask, or a silver flask coated in gold. It is refined in golden or glass bottles.

“As for the method of formulating it and the proportion of its ingredients, it is as follows. First one takes an ounce of good musk and pounds it delicately so that it does not burn from excessive pounding. Then it is sifted in a fine mesh sieve, and if it may be sifted without being pounded first, then that is better. Then, one takes half an ounce of sweet amber and melts it in a flask over the weakest possible flame. When it begins to melt, a few drops of sweetened ben tree oil are added to it, and the mixture should be taken off the heat after it melts. Then one checks it with one’s fingertips, and if it contains any sand, it should be removed. One then adds it to the musk in the mortar, and it is important that the amber not be hot, for its heat will corrupt the musk. Then it is all pounded together delicately in the mortar until the amber mixes with the musk, and they are then divided [into separate

quantities] with a thin plate of gold. One should not use brass or iron, for they will corrupt the mixture. The fragrance is then refined with ben tree oil according to how fine or dense one likes it. There is no specific amount of ben oil that one should use, and if one would like to use equal parts of musk and amber, or less musk than amber, one may do so.”

This is what al-Zahrāwī reported on musk-based fragrances. And Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tamīmī recounted many types of them in his book entitled *The Bride’s Collar*. We shall recount some of those that were made for caliphs, kings, and other nobles.

According to Ahmad ibn Abī Ya‘qūb, this is a recipe for a musk-based fragrance made for caliphs: Take one hundred *mithqāls* (15 oz.) of rare Tibetan musk and pound it after cleaning it of organ matter and hair. Then sift it through heavy Chinese silk. Repeat the pounding and sifting until it becomes a fine dust. Then take a Meccan vessel or Chinese bowl and place in either of them some green seeds of the ben oil tree, of a sufficient amount. Then cut fifty *mithqāls* (7.5 oz.) of dark blue amber from Shihr (Yemen) into it, and refine the contents of the bowl—the ben oil and amber—over a weak coal fire with no smoke or smell (for it will corrupt it). Stir it with a gold or silver spoon until the amber melts, and then take it off the fire. When its heat abates, add the musk to it and mix it vigorously with your hand until it is fully combined. Then let the mixture refine in a gold or silver vessel with a thin neck that may be stoppered, or a small and clean glass bottle. Seal it with a stopper made of Chinese silk and cotton so that its odor does not escape. . . . This is the best of all musk-based fragrances. If you use equal parts musk and amber, there is no harm in that. Such a fragrance used to be made for (the Abbasid military commander) Humayd al-Tūsī, and it impressed the caliph al-Ma’mūn greatly. It was also made for Umm Ja‘far (the wife of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd), but they would add Nishapurian jasmine oil to it, equal to one-quarter of the quantity of ben. They would also make it for (the governor of Basra) Muhammad ibn Sulaymān, except that they would also add a little pure balsam oil to the ben and jasmine. Umm Ja‘far also had another fragrance made for her called the amber fragrance, which contained ten parts amber to three parts musk, and its recipe otherwise corresponded to the above.

As for compound perfumes made with aromatic woods, al-Tamīmī recounted many different kinds, [the most well-known of which] involves taking 50 *mithqāls* (7.5 oz.) of good aromatic wood and an equivalent quantity of Tibetan musk, and adding to it 130 *mithqāls* (19.5 oz.) of amber from India or al-Shihr. It is kneaded, molded into triangles,* dried, and refined.

As for such fragrances produced today in Egypt, they are rare and

difficult to find. They may be carried on one's person, or stored (among clothes), or used as incense, and they are made into all shapes and sizes such as balls, rosettes, triangles, and other things. They are strung on necklaces and armlets, ornamental belts and prayer beads, and so on. People tuck them into their clothes when they get dressed, and they walk around with them. They do not break or alter in shape whether a person is sitting or running, and if a single ball or rosette or bead does break, it may be used as incense or for another purpose, while the rest remain intact on the string, unaffected by the breakage. These fragrances never crumble unless they are gnawed or cut with a razor or a dagger. The longer they are stored the better and harder they become. When they are placed over fire, their perfume spreads, but if they are mixed with jasmine, it weakens. After much time and use, and once their smell has been corrupted by sweat, they may be broken down and mixed with some amber from al-Shihr, some ground musk, and they may be returned to their former state or any form their master wishes. They will be as good as new, or even better and more beneficial than they were before.

Compound perfumes are called amber today. When one hears talk of amber, this is what is meant. Real amber is referred to as "raw" amber by way of distinction. There are three kinds of this perfume that people use in our day, and the first is called the Triple (*al-muthallath*), and it is the best and most fragrant. It is composed of one part of good, heavy, fat Yemeni amber, one part Indian aromatic wood, and one part Tibetan musk. . . . This perfume, however, is supple and cannot be worn as part of one's clothing. Rather, it is carried in one's pocket, burned as incense, smelled, or placed among one's clothing (in a closet), and so on.

ON THE MEDICINES THAT PROMOTE SEXUAL POTENCY AND MAKE COITUS PLEASURABLE, AND ON THE RELATED SUBJECTS OF MEDICINES FOR THE PENIS, MEDICINES THAT AID CONCEPTION AND PREVENT IT, AND SO ON

Know that the treatment of sexual potency requires medicines to restore both the interior and exterior parts of the body. With regard to the interior of the body, it is treated with commonly used medicines such as certain food and compound drugs, purées, jams, powders, enemas, and suppositories. As for the exterior of the body, it is treated with ointments, dressings, and medicines that increase pleasure during sex.

Here are some foods that are beneficial for this purpose. Among

them is a description of an omelet that increases sexual potency. Take chickpeas, broad beans, eggs, and white onions, and cook them in milk until the moisture boils off. Then put it all into a mortar and pound it fine until it is all mixed together. Then add the yolks of ten eggs, put the whole mixture into a skillet, and fry it in oil. Add some spices, and do not leave it to burn, but instead eat it before it is completely cooked.

A Food That Increases Sexual Appetite

Take a fat hen that has been raised on chickpeas, broad beans, and kidney beans (or string beans), and slaughter and clean it. Boil some chickpeas in a broth full of onions, then dry them and pound them in the fat of three chickens. Then stuff them in the fat chickens and cook it as an *isfidabaja** stew, with as much salt as one uses to salt a skink.* Sprinkle Chinese cinnamon, ginger, and other spices over it, and place the chicken, once it finishes cooking, on a loaf of bread made with semolina flour, very little salt and yeast. Leave the bread to soak up the broth, and then eat it with the chicken.

Some Mixed Drinks That Promote Sexual Vigor

Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī and others have described various such drinks.* He wrote: “Take two *ratls* of milk from a young, fair cow.* Add some white Persian manna to it and boil it over a hot fire until it has the thickness of honey. Each day, swallow an ounce or more on an empty stomach. This is to be used by those with hot and dry (choleric) temperaments.”

Another drink for those with cold and dry (melancholic) temperaments: Take a *ratl* of milk, and add to it ten dirhams of Chinese cinnamon, ground as finely as kohl. Leave it for an hour then drink several cups, making sure to stir it so that the cinnamon does not settle to the bottom. Gradually, one should drink it before and after a meal instead of water and when one is thirsty, until one has finished all of the milk and the Chinese cinnamon. Meanwhile, eat *tabāhaj* (a Persian dish) made with lamb accompanied by wine. Do that for a week, during which you should not have sex. This will generate a lot of sperm and create a large appetite for sex.

Another Medicine with Wondrous Abilities to Increase Sexual Energy

Take dried star thistle and pound it until it is very fine. Then squeeze some juice from fresh star thistles and sprinkle it over the dried powder in the sun until the latter soaks up three times its own weight's worth. Then take 5 *mithqāls*' (.75 oz.) worth of pellitory,* 1

mithqāl (.15 oz.) of ginger, and 5 *mithqāls* (.75 oz.) of hardened white sugar, and pound it all together. Sift it and knead it into some honey infused with ginger, then set it aside to refine. The dosage is two *mithqāls* (.3 oz.) in some warm water, or milk. There is no other drink that is as effective for this purpose.

Jams That Strengthen Sexual Appetite and the Stomach

The author of *The Clarification of the Secrets of Sexual Intercourse* said: *
“All jams must contain the following spices: one ounce each of ginger, Chinese cinnamon, cinnamon rind, cloves, cardamom, nutmeg, gum mastic, and Indian aromatic wood; half an ounce of saffron, two *mithqāls* (.3 oz.) of *sukk*,* and half a *mithqāl* (.07 oz.) of musk. Grind these ingredients coarsely and bind them loosely in a flax rag, and suspend an ounce’s worth in every *ratl* of jam.

A Recipe for Walnut Jam, Which Promotes Sexual Vigor

Take some fresh green walnuts, whose skin has not yet hardened. Take the outer skin off, and if there is an inner skin that has hardened, take that off as well. Put them in a stone pot and pour enough honey in to cover them. Bring it all to a gentle boil and then pour it into a glass vessel. Suspend the spices into it, and wash the exterior of the bottle in water (for three days, so that it cools).

Some Enemas and Suppositories That Increase Sexual Appetite, Promote Sperm Production, and Fatten the Kidneys

These enemas and suppositories may be used for one who is unable to consume the medicines we have already presented, whether because of their inflammatory properties or because of an aversion to their taste. In that case the enemas and suppositories may be substituted and will play the same role. However, prior to using one, one must first administer an enema that cleanses the intestines. That way, the effect of the second enema will be speedier and more beneficial.

A Recipe for an Enema That Cleanses the Intestines and Purifies Them

Take 7 *mithqāls* (1 oz.) each of chamomile, flaxseed, fenugreek, and garden dill; 14 *mithqāls* (2 oz.) of terebinth and star thistle and fig, and cook all of these ingredients in 5 *ratls* of water. Boil until only 1 *ratl* remains, and strain the liquid. Add 15 *mithqāls* (2.25 oz.) of sesame oil to half a *ratl* of the liquid along with 7 *mithqāls* (1 oz.) of (hardened) red sugar, and administer it in the form of an enema.

As for Suppositories That Create a Powerful Erection

Take equal parts of carrot seed, arugula seed, autumn crocus, and cottonseed kernels, and knead them together in elecampane water or arugula water. A suppository can be made out of that, and it will raise a mighty erection.

Another recipe: take some ground centaury, pine resin, beeswax, and melt it in lily oil. Make it into a suppository and administer it, and it will produce a wondrous erection.

So much for internal remedies. Let us now recount some medicines that are beneficial to the exterior of the body, such as ointments, bandages, and other medicines that make sex more pleasurable.

An Ointment for the Penis That Excites One's Lust for Sex

Take 2 *mithqāls* (.3 oz.) each of pellitory, mace, and long pepper, 1 *mithqāl* (.15 oz.) each of galbanum and euphorbia, half a *mithqāl* (.07 oz.) each of castoreum and arugula seed, 10 *mithqāls* (1.5 oz.) of narcissus oil, and 4 *mithqāls* (.6 oz.) of white wax. Grind the dry ingredients and melt the wax and galbanum along with the oil over a flame, and then combine them. Set them aside to refine, then rub the penis and pubic hair with it. It is beneficial for the aforementioned purpose.

A Recipe for Another Medicine That Produces Indescribable Pleasure

Take two *mithqāls* (.3 oz.) each of dried and toasted fennel seeds, pepper, long pepper, ginger, pellitory, Chinese cinnamon, nutmeg, wild caraway, and hardened sugar, and combine them after they have been ground and sifted. Dissolve the mixture in fennel water or basil water until it becomes as thick as oil. Leave it to refine in a sealed glass bottle for ten days, and shake it three times each day. Then spread it upon the penis and leave it to dry, at which point you should have sex. Aspire to have the ointment dissolve during intercourse. Be sure not to leave the bottle open, for the air will weaken the medicine's potency! No woman will be able to resist any man who uses this remedy.

MEDICINES FOR THE SEXUAL ORGANS

Having discussed sexual medicines, let us now discuss some medicines that increase the size and rigidity of the penis, as well as medicines that tighten women's vaginas and dry out their moisture.

Galen and the other sages who followed him were in agreement that

rubbing one's body in the bath on a regular basis, anointing oneself with oils and other softening substances, using hot compresses, and having massages with oil and pitch all enlarge every limb of the body. There was no disagreement among them about the idea that any limb would grow beyond the size of its present state after receiving such treatment. Therefore, if one combines it with the medicines that we will mention below—and they are all remedies whose quality and soundness is recognized by doctors—then the outcome will be greater and quicker.

A Recipe to Increase the Size of the Penis and Improve Its Appearance

Take equal parts grilled sea onion, euphorbia, pellitory, and long pepper. Pound them to a fine dust and knead them into honey. Spread some of this on the penis and leave it for a night, then wash in the early morning with hot water. Anoint again with jasmine oil. This will greatly enlarge it.

ON THE MEDICINES THAT TIGHTEN THE VAGINA, MAKE IT WARMER, AND DRY ITS MOISTURE

Abd al-Rahmān ibn Nasr al-Shayzarī said: “Know that a man will never achieve perfect sexual pleasure unless a vagina has three qualities: tightness, warmth, and dryness. If one or two of these qualities are missing, this will impact the pleasure that a man experiences during sex, in the corresponding degree. And if the vagina lacks all three qualities, no pleasure can be achieved at all.”

A Recipe for a Medicine to Tighten the Vagina

Take one dirham's worth of the scorched skin of a jackal, the scorched hooves of a goat, the scorched hoof of a donkey, scorched thorn apple, a scorched sea crab, scorched polypody, and Persian thyme, and grind them all to a fine powder. Knead it in ben tree oil and let it refine. Then the woman may administer it as a suppository with the weight of two carob grains three times a month, once every ten days. She should not do so when she is menstruating. . . . This will tighten the vagina so that the woman becomes like a virgin.

A Recipe for Another Medicine to Tighten the Vagina

Take some musk *sukk* and saffron and pour some basil cordial over them. Boil the mixture well, and saturate a linen rag with it, and set it

aside until it is needed. When the woman would like to use it, she should cut off a piece and administer it as a suppository one day before having sex. It will tighten the vagina and improve its scent.

A Recipe to Dry the Vagina's Dampness

Take equal parts alum and kohl and grind them. The woman should administer a few sprinkles of each in a suppository, for this is effective.

SOME MEDICINES THAT SWEETEN THE SMELL OF THE BODY AND MAKE IT FRAGRANT

Take equal parts wild thyme, mint, sweet marjoram, and apple leaves, and submerge them in water, with an excess of four fingers' worth. Cook the mixture until it reduces by a third, then strain it and rub it upon the body. It will sweeten the body's smell and block its foul odors.

Recipe for a Pungent Cake That Eliminates Armpit Odor

Take equal parts of sandalwood, bastard cinnamon, musk *sukk*, spikenard, alum, myrrh, and red roses, three parts each of zinc oxide and litharge, and half a part of camphor. Combine these ingredients after grinding them and knead them together in rosewater. Form the mixture into a round cake and use it after it dries.

Some Medicines That Rid the Teeth of Their Yellowness and Blackness and Sweeten the Smell of One's Breath

Among the tooth powders that clean the teeth is this one: Take equal parts of scorched deer horn, Yemeni salt from Andarān, meerschaum, two parts each of scorched tamarisk leaves and scorched sugarcane root, a quarter part of *shādhanj*, and one part of Chinese pottery. Pound it all together, mix it up, and apply to the teeth.

Medicines That Help Promote Pregnancy and Those That Prevent It

Take some elephant urine and give it to the woman to drink without her knowing what it is. Then have sexual intercourse with her. She will then become pregnant, with God's permission.

Another medicine, this one among the secrets: Daub the penis with milk and leave it to dry. Then have sex immediately after the woman

becomes pure (after her menstrual period), and it will be effective.

The author of *The Clarification of the Secrets of Sexual Intercourse* wrote: “Anyone who uses one of these remedies should seek to have intercourse during the time when the woman is pure of her menstrual discharge. And it is important to raise her hips after the ejaculation, and her head should be lower (than the rest of her body), for that will aid conception. It is also important for the man, when he perceives that he is about to ejaculate, to lean to his right side. If he does so, the child will be a boy, God willing.”

As for the Medicines That Prevent Pregnancy

In addition to the medicines discussed below, the man should do the opposite of what we stated above. In other words, he should ejaculate before she reaches orgasm, and rise up from her quickly, and not copulate with her right after she becomes pure.

As for the medicines, here is one that prevents conception and aborts a fetus. Take equal parts dried rue and Egyptian natron, grind them together, sift, and dissolve in rue water. Daub that upon the opening of the urethra and then copulate.

Another similar medicine: Take some galbanum and pound it in the juice of rue and the water of green coriander until it becomes moist. Smear it on the penis and have sex. It will prevent conception and will abort a fetus.

Having recounted some medicines that increase sexual potency, make the sperm more copious, and other such matters and connected topics, let us now discuss the medicines that diminish sexual potency and calm one’s desire, for sometimes this is necessary. These medicines include simple and compound drugs.

Simple drugs—These include purslane, lettuce, gourd, hemp seed, lentils, palm pith, barley, and other sour things such as verjuice, mulberry, sour pomegranate, cedrate pulp, vinegar, and garden nightshade. Also: melon, cucumber, quince, apricot, and similar things. There is also peppermint, marjoram, Syrian rue, cumin, ispaghula, camphor, henbane, rose, white willow, spinach, and anything cooling and drying. These are the simple drugs.

Compound drugs—Some are foods and some are medicines. As for the foods, they include dishes cooked with sumac, verjuice, and lemon; also, *al-sikbāj* (a vinegary meat stew), *al-masūs* (another vinegary meat dish), *al-madīra* (meat cooked in sour milk), lentils, *al-tʿAmriyya* (a dish cooked with dates), *al-zabibiyya* (a dish cooked with raisins), and other similar things that contain vinegar or acidity.

As for the medicines, they include this recipe that diminishes desire and coagulates one’s sperm. Take toasted coriander, cucumber seed,

narcissus seed, flaxseed, and pomegranate flower, and toast all of the seeds. Then take equal parts sumac, African rue, white henbane, blue vitriol, and white sandalwood. Combine all these ingredients after pounding and sifting them, and knead them into water squeezed from roses and purslane. Separate into small pellets the size of chickpeas and let them dry in the shade, then set them aside to refine in a stoppered glass bottle. When needed, dissolve one of the pellets in the mucilage of ispaghula seed, and smear the opening of the urethra with it three times a week. And if the vertebrae of the spine are smeared with it repeatedly for successive days, it will end one's procreation and kill the desire for sex.

ON THE USES OF NATURE'S MAGICAL PROPERTIES

Know that there are many magical properties of nature, and they can hardly be circumscribed. Nor are their effects all well-known. I have recounted here a small portion of them by way of closing this section. Let us begin with some that are related to the subject of sexual intercourse, so that it may follow what came before.

Some Magical Properties Connected with Women and Sexual Intercourse That Have Been Investigated and Tested

Here is one from the Indians. Take the head of a black crow and scoop out its brain. In place of the brain, put some dirt taken from the spot where the woman whom you seek sits, and also a little detritus from the bath along with seven grains of barley. Bury the crow's head in the ground, in a moist place. Once the barley grows to the height of four fingers, take some of it and rub it on your hand, wipe it on your face and forearms, and then approach the woman without speaking to her. She will chase after you and will not be able to live without you.

Another secret—The author of the *Book of Properties* said:^{*} Take the nails of a magpie and your own nail clippings, burn them together, and grind them into a fine powder. Slip it into a glass of wine and give it to any unwitting woman you desire. She will become attracted to you and will love to be near you.

Some Magical Properties Unlike What Was Previously Recounted

Wormwood protects clothes from grubs and vermin. It also prevents ink from changing color and paper from eroding. Citron peel protects clothes from grubs if placed among them, as do Indian spikenard, hellebore, and mint leaves.

The magical properties of letters and names are manifold, and al-Būnī has recounted them.* Some are known to have effects connected with the rising of the stars, and they are tied to specific times. Others do not have appointed times, and I have set forth some of them below, as you shall see.

The shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Būnī, may God have mercy on him, wrote in his book entitled *The Subtleties of Allusions on the Mysteries of the Sublime Letters* (*Latā'if al-ishārāt fī asrār al-hurūf al-'ulwiyyāt*):

“Whosoever inscribes the letter hā eight times upon the gemstone of a ring and also writes: ‘O the Ever-Living! O the Forbearing! O the All-Merciful! O the Wise!’ will be protected from all fevers.”

And if one places the ring in some water and gives it to the feverish to drink, it will make the fever abate. If they continue to drink that water and use it to cool themselves off, the fever will depart completely.

Al-Būnī said: “The elderly person should not wear such a ring too often. One of its properties is to decrease sexual vigor. If a young person carries the ring, this is more suitable than wearing it, and he should not carry it on Saturdays or Mondays, but rather the other days of the week. Whoever touches the ring will feel his thirst quenched and his desire for drinking abated. If the ring is hung in an orchard, it will grow and bear fruit and increase in splendor.”

THE FIFTH BOOK

ON HISTORY

Is it not a guidance to them how many generations We destroyed before them in whose dwelling-places they walk? Surely these are signs. Will they not hear?

Q 32:26

Have they not traveled through the land and beheld the consequences of those who preceded them? They were more numerous than these and mightier in strength and left firmer traces in the earth. Yet all that they earned did not avail them.

Q 40:82

The study of history is required for the king and the minister, the general and the prince, the scribe and the counselor, the rich man and the poor man, the desert dweller and city dweller, the sedentary and nomadic. The king gains experience by contemplating former states and peoples. The minister imitates the actions of his predecessors who successfully wielded both the sword and the pen. The general may learn, from history, about the stratagems of war and different battle positions. The counselor considers his opinion and only offers it after much reflection; he studies a matter as a member of the ruler's entourage, possessed of a sharp mind. The scribe bears witness to history in his letters and other writings, and may expatiate upon it in straitened conditions. The rich man praises God for what He has conferred upon him in the way of blessings and prosperity, and he spends what God has given him when he understands that there is no escape from his own end and passing. And the poor man desires asceticism because he knows that the world is not eternal. Every other person hears about history through evening conversations and other gatherings, desiring to learn the stories of the different nations, the battle days of the Arabs, and the wars with the barbarians.*

This introduction makes clear how authority depends upon history and how humans incline toward it. In this book I shall present a collection of the histories of former nations and elapsed ages, and I will embellish them with such stories and narratives as to unencumber these pages.

Having seen that most people who have composed the history of the Muslims have arranged their works based on the annalistic principle rather than that of dynasties, I determined that such an arrangement deprived the reader of the pleasure of an event that might delight him, and a matter that he might seek to understand. The account of each year (in annalistic chronicles) would come to an end without the reader learning its outcome, whether in summary or in detail. The historian would then move on to the beginning of the next year, returning to the same events and reports. He would go from east to west, careening from peace to war, south to north, mornings to evenings, while the horse of digression roamed freely with him, taking him far off course. Large dunes interposed between him and his destination, such that he sometimes found himself in a valley and other times at a summit. Meanwhile, the reader could only pick up the thread of what interested him with difficulty, and so dropped it when the distance and journey became too great.

I decided, therefore, to organize this history according to states, and not to pass beyond the boundaries of a state once I had begun discussing it until I had laid out its history from beginning to end, recounting the sum of its battles and its exploits, the stories of its kings, the locations of its kingdoms, and the branching of its routes.

After its term expired and its people perished, leaving only a trace behind them, I would turn to a different state and follow its path, explaining its history and elucidating its experience. I have recounted its origins and enumerated its genealogies, beginning with its root and lauding the exploits of its distinguished citizens. I investigated one state after another in this fashion, and the stallions of reading carried me away on a remarkable voyage! In light of all this, I have sought to be succinct but not overly so, and I have set forth what must be said without repetition or prolixity.

In cases of a battle between two kings whose lifetimes overlapped—but only one of whom Fate assisted against the other—I have addressed the event in its entirety within the context of the victorious party's history and passed over it in my discussion of the defeated party, making do with a single treatment and only pausing to mention it by way of allusion, in the case of the latter.

In organizing this book, I have followed the same principle as the previous books, so as to make things simpler to the soul, livelier to the mind, and more delightful to the eye. I have, therefore, given it five divisions and composed it with the finest harmony and most perfect order.*

Adam and Eve

God created Adam from earth, as evidenced by His Word: “Surely, We created man of a clay molded” (Q 15:26); “Truly, the likeness of Jesus, in God’s sight, is as Adam’s likeness; He created him of dust. . . .” (Q 3:59); and, narrating the words of Satan: “Said he, ‘I am better than [Adam]; Thou createdst me of fire, and him Thou createdst of clay.’” (Q 38:76) This is a clear matter upon which there is no disagreement, and therefore there is no need to supply further proof.

It has been said that Adam was so called because God created him from the surface (*adīm*) of the earth. It was also reported, on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih, that Adam’s head was made from the first earth, his neck from the second, his breast from the third, his hands from the fourth, his stomach and back from the fifth, his thighs and genitals and buttocks from the sixth, his legs and feet from the seventh.

When God created Adam and fashioned him into human form, He ordered the angels to carry him and place him at the gate to Paradise before the passage of the angels. Adam was at that time only a body with no soul, and the angels were amazed by his created form, for they had never seen anything like him. Satan stared at him for a long time, saying: “God created this thing for some purpose.” He then entered Adam, and when he emerged, said: “This is a weak creation, made of hollow clay. Hollow things need to be filled with food and drink.”

Satan then said to the angels: “What will you do if God prefers this created being over you?” They replied: “We will obey the command of our Lord and we will not rebel against Him.” Satan then said: “If He prefers it to me, then I will rebel against Him. And if He prefers me to it, then I will destroy it.”

ON THE BREATH OF LIFE’S ENTRANCE INTO ADAM

When God willed that life be breathed into Adam, He bid his spirit into existence, and it was plunged into every kind of light. It is unlike

the spirits of the angels or any of the created beings.

God said: "When I have shaped him, and breathed My spirit into him, fall you down, bowing before him!" (Q 15:29) and "They will question thee concerning the Spirit. Say: 'The Spirit is of the bidding of my Lord.'" (Q 17:85)

God commanded that Adam's spirit enter his body slowly and deliberately without rushing, and it found a tight and cramped opening. The spirit said: "My Lord, how shall I enter?" and the response came: "Enter unwillingly, and leave unwillingly!"

So the spirit entered from the summit of Adam's head and went into his eyes, and Adam opened them and looked at his earthen self. The spirit reached his ears, and Adam heard the glorification of the angels. It began to circulate in his head while the angels watched him, and then the spirit arrived at his nostrils, whereupon Adam sneezed and his airways were opened.

Then the spirit moved to his tongue, and Adam said: "Praise be to God, the Eternal and Everlasting." These were the first words that he uttered. Then the Lord called to him and said: "Your Lord has mercy upon you, oh Adam, for this is why I created you. This is yours, and for your progeny." Then the spirit traveled throughout his body until it drew close to his feet, and Adam became flesh and blood and bone and vein, but his legs remained clay. He tried to stand up but could not, and God said: "Man is ever hasty." (Q 17:11)

When the spirit traveled through his legs and feet, he stood up straight upon his feet. That was on a Friday.

THE ANGELS' PROSTRATION BEFORE ADAM

And when he stood up, God commanded the angels to prostrate before him, and they all did except for Satan, as God said: "Then the angels bowed themselves all together, except Satan; he waxed proud and was one of the unbelievers. God said: 'Satan, what prevented thee to bow thyself before that I created with My own hands? Hast thou waxed proud, or art thou of the lofty ones?' And Satan said: 'I am better than he; Thou createdst me of fire, and him Thou createdst of clay.'" (Q 38:73-76)

God taught Adam all the names and all of the languages. And Ibn 'Abbās said that God taught Adam even the language of the fish, the frogs, and everything on land and sea. Then God commanded the angels to carry Adam on their shoulders and make the rounds of the heavens with him, which they did.

Then the angel Gabriel issued the order for all the angels to assemble. They came together and stood side by side in twenty

thousand rows, and a dais of honor was placed for Adam, who wore clothes made of green silk brocade and two braids suffused with musk and amber. Upon his head was a golden crown encrusted with pearls and jewels. He ascended the dais and greeted the angels, who returned his greeting, and he preached to them and praised God. And then he recounted the science of the heavens and the two earths, and what was found in them, which is what God refers to in His word: “And He taught Adam the names—all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, ‘Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.’ They said, ‘Glory be to Thee! We know not save what Thou hast taught us. Surely Thou art the All-knowing, the All-wise.’ He said, ‘Adam, tell them their names.’ And when he had told them their names He said, ‘Did I not tell you I know the unseen things of the heavens and earth? And I know what things you reveal, and what you were hiding.’” (Q 2:31–33)

Then Adam came down from the dais and he was brought a bunch of white grapes, and he ate them. This was the first thing that Adam ate from the food of Paradise. Then drowsiness overtook him, and he fell asleep.

ON THE CREATION OF EVE

When Adam fell asleep, God created Eve from a crooked rib on Adam’s left side that was flanked by some cartilage. And God said: “Mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate. . . .” (Q 4:1)

Eve was the same size as Adam, and just as lovely and beautiful. However, her skin was more delicate, her voice more pleasant, and she had braids adorned with jewels and musk, which made her tresses rustle when she moved. So she sat near Adam’s head, and he awoke and saw her. Love seized his heart, and he said: “O Lord! Who is this?” And God replied: “She is my servant, Eve.” Adam said: “O Lord, for whom did You create her?” God replied: “For one who receives her faithfully and gratefully.” Adam said: “O Lord, I will receive her in this way, so marry her to me.” So God married Eve to Adam before they entered Paradise, on the conditions of obedience, piety, and righteous acts, and the angels scattered the fruit of Paradise over them.

ON THE TRUST OFFERED TO ADAM

God Most High said: “We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it. But man [undertook to] carry it. Surely he is sinful, very foolish.” (Q 33:72)

The trust that God offered to the heavens and earth and mountains was that they would be rewarded for good deeds and punished for bad deeds, but they declined. So it was offered to Adam, and God said to him: “If you are obedient, I will reward you and preserve you forever in Paradise; but if you break this compact, I will cast you from my house and punish you in my fire.” Adam accepted this trust, and the angels were amazed by this. Then Satan was presented before Adam and Eve and God said: “This is an enemy to thee and thy wife. So let him not expel you both from the Garden, lest thou come to grief.” (Q 20:117)

Then God bid Adam and Eve to enter Paradise under His trust and covenant, saying: “. . . and eat from it plentifully where you desire; but do not draw near this tree, lest you be among the evildoers.” (Q 2:35)

God commanded that they be admitted to Paradise, and Adam was carried upon the horse al-Maymūn, with Eve riding behind him on a camel, and angels to the right and left of them, and behind and ahead of them. They reached the Gate of Paradise and entered, and settled there, in Eden, after touring all around the Garden. They were presented with the fruits of Paradise and they ate, and remained there for five hundred earthly years in perfect happiness and the most delightful existence.

ON SATAN, THE PEACOCK, AND THE SERPENT

When Satan heard that God had permitted Adam to eat all of the fruits of Paradise except for those of one tree, he was gladdened, and said: “I will expel them from Paradise.” So he made his way secretly through the stages of the heavens until he stood before the Gate of Paradise. Lo and behold, a peacock was just leaving. It had two wings that were so large when unfurled that they could conceal the lotus tree of the seventh heaven. And it had a tail made of green emeralds, with a white jewel on each feather, while its eyes were red rubies. Of all the birds in Paradise, it had the sweetest voice and song, and it had the habit of striding proudly out into the heavens before returning to Paradise.

When Satan saw the peacock, he said to it gently: “O wondrous bird, oh sweet-voiced creation, which of the birds of Paradise are you?” It replied: “I am the peacock. What is wrong with you, stranger?

You seem frightened by someone who is after you. . . .” Satan replied: “I am one of the angels of the highest heaven. I belong to the troop of cherubim, and I had hoped to look in on Paradise to see what God had prepared in it for its residents. Might you let me in? In exchange I will teach you three words which, when uttered, will protect their speaker from old age, sickness, and death. The peacock replied: “Do the residents of Paradise die?” Satan said: “Yes, indeed, and they become sick and decrepit as well. All but those who know these words, that is. . . .” Satan swore to this, and the peacock trusted him, for he did not think that anyone could falsely swear to God. So he said: “I absolutely need these words, but I fear that the angel Ridwān (the custodian of Paradise) will ask me about you. I shall send you the serpent, for she is the leader of all the beasts of Paradise.”

The peacock went to see the serpent, who had assumed the form of a camel that day. She had a downy coat resembling a rich, multicolored carpet, mixing whites and reds and blacks and greens, and a mane of pearls, and ruby plaits suffused with musk and amber. She lived in the Garden of Refuge (*jannat al-mawā*) and she kept Adam and Eve company, teaching them about the trees.

When the peacock told the serpent his news, she hurried toward the Gate of Paradise, and Satan approached her and told her what he had said to the peacock, making the same pledge. She said: “I’ve heard enough. But how can I bring you in?” Satan replied: “I see a space between your two fangs. I can fit there.” So the serpent opened her mouth and Satan leapt inside and sat down between her two fangs, and from that day until the end of time, her fangs became poisonous.

The serpent closed her lips and entered Paradise, and Ridwān the angel did not speak to them. When she reached the middle of Paradise, the serpent said: “Get out, and hurry!” But Satan said: “What I need in Paradise are Adam and Eve. I want to speak to them from your mouth, and if you do not do this for me, I will not teach you the words.” So the serpent went to Eve and Satan spoke to her from inside: “O Eve, do you not know that I am here with you in Paradise, and that I tell you about everything that it contains, and that I am honest about everything I tell you?” Eve replied: “Yes.” Then Satan said: “O Eve, tell me what your Lord made permissible for you in Paradise, and what He has forbidden you.”

So Eve told Satan about what God had forbidden them, and he replied: “Why has He forbidden you from the Tree of Eternity?” Eve replied: “I have no knowledge of that.” And Satan said: “I do. God has forbidden you from it because He does not want to do to you and Adam what He did to his slave who lives at the foot of the Tree of Eternity.”

Satan said all of this, and Eve thought that it was the speech of the

serpent. So Eve leapt out of her bed to go look at the slave. Quick as lightning, Satan jumped out of the serpent's mouth and went and sat under the tree. Eve approached gingerly, standing at a distance, and called out to him: "Who are you, oh stranger?" He replied: "One of God's creation, whom He created out of fire, just as you see me. I have been in Paradise for two thousand years. He created me as He created you two, with His own hands, and He breathed life into me, and made the angels prostrate before me, and brought me into His Paradise. He forbade me from eating from this tree, and I used to not eat from it until one of the angels gave me some advice, saying: 'Eat of it, for whoever does so will remain for eternity in Paradise.' So I ate of it, and I have been here ever since, safe from old age, sickness, death, and expulsion from Paradise."

Then he said: "But God Your Lord has only prohibited you from this tree lest you become angels, or lest you become immortals" (Q 7:20), and he called out to Eve, saying: "Quick, eat of it before your husband does, for whoever eats first will have precedence over their companion." So Eve went to Adam, rejoicing with happiness, and told him the story of the serpent and the stranger, and how he had sworn to her: "I am a sincere counselor unto you." (Q 7:21)

Eve then approached the tree, which had innumerable branches covered with ears whose seeds were the size of earthenware pots. They smelled of musk and were whiter than milk and sweeter than honey.

Eve took seven ears from seven branches, ate one and saved one, and brought the remaining five to Adam.

Ibn 'Abbās said that Adam had no role in this matter, for it was predestined, as revealed by God's word: "And when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a viceroy.' They said, 'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?' God said, 'Indeed, I know that which you do not know.'" (Q 2:30) Adam then took the ears from her hand, having forgotten the covenant that he had accepted, as God said: "And We made covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and We found in him no constancy." (Q 20:115) Then he tasted the fruit of the tree as Eve had, and God said: "... and when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness became manifest to them." (Q 7:22)

Ibn 'Abbās said: "By He who holds my soul in His hand, no sooner had Adam tasted one of the ears than the crown flew off his head, he was stripped of his clothing, his rings were plucked from his fingers, and all of Eve's clothes and adornments fell off her. Each thing cried out to them, as it flew off their bodies, saying: 'O Adam, may your sorrow be prolonged, and may your loss be great! Peace be with you

until the Day of Resurrection!”

Not a piece of clothing remained upon them, “so they took to stitching upon themselves leaves of the Garden. And their Lord called to them, ‘Did not I prohibit you from this tree, and say to you, “Indeed, Satan is for you a manifest foe?”’” (Q 7:22) Then each of them looked at the nakedness of their companion, and Satan fled, traveling through the stages of the heavens. Adam let out a mighty cry, and every last thing in Paradise rebuked him, and the trees withdrew from him. When the rebukes increased, Adam fled but the acacia tree enclosed him, seized him, and cried out: “Where are you fleeing to, oh rebel?” And the angels became greatly unsettled. . . .

Then God ordered the angel Gabriel to come and seize hold of Adam’s forelock, and he took him out of the tree and marched him to the Gate of Paradise.

Eve said: “God, You created me from a crooked rib, and made me deficient of intellect and religion, and made my testimony and inheritance less than a man’s. And You afflicted me with impurity (from menstruation) and forbade me from joining the Friday prayer and other large gatherings, and gave me the difficulties of pregnancy and childbirth. So I ask You to give me what You have given to men.”

God said: “I have granted you the gifts of modesty, sociability, and mercy. And if you knew what My reward to you was for pregnancy and childbirth, it would gladden your eye, for any woman who dies in childbirth will join the troop of blessed martyrs.” And Eve replied: “That is sufficient for me, oh Lord.”

Then God commanded that they descend to the earth, and He said: “Then Satan caused them to slip therefrom and brought them out of that they were in; and We said, ‘Get you all down, each of you an enemy of each; and in the earth a sojourn shall be yours, and enjoyment for a time.’” (Q 2:36) Adam fell from the Gate of Repentance, and Eve fell from the Gate of Mercy. Satan fell from the Gate of Curses, the peacock fell from the Gate of Anger, and the serpent fell from the Gate of Wrath.

Adam fell down into India and landed on one of its mountains, named Būdh. It is a mountain that encircles the land of India. Eve fell to Jeddah, Satan fell to Dast Maysān (near Basra), the serpent fell to Isfahan, and the peacock fell into the sea. God separated them and none could see the other.

When Adam fell to earth, he was only wearing a single leaf from the Tree of Eternity, and the winds scattered it, which is how India became a source of perfume. Adam cried for one hundred years, and aromatic woods grew from his tears, along with ginger, sandalwood, camphor, all kinds of aromatics, and India’s valleys were filled with the sweetest-smelling trees. Eve’s tears produced cloves and spices,

and the winds would carry Adam's words to Eve and her words to him.

The first animal to learn of Adam's fall to earth was the eagle. It was a friend of the whale, and it came to him and said: "Today I saw a large creature that was, by turns, dejected and happy, standing and sitting, coming and going." The whale said: "If what you are saying is true, then the time has come when I may not share the seas with him nor you the land. I bid you farewell." So the vulture went to Adam and befriended him, and other beasts and birds came to Adam and befriended him, and wept alongside him for an age. When all of this weeping vexed them, they left him and only the vulture remained, and he continued to weep.

Adam wept until the angels wept over his weeping, and they said: "O God, ease his distress!" He cried for three hundred years without raising his head to the sky, saying: "O my Lord, how dare I regard the heavens?" Then God inspired all the animals to come to Adam and pay him their condolences for his calamity. They visited him and made him stop crying and glorify God.

ON THE REUNION OF ADAM AND EVE

An angel came to Eve in Jeddah while she was sitting on the beach and said to her: "Take your clothes and go to the Holy Sanctuary (in Mecca)," and he threw her a gown and a veil from Paradise. Then he disappeared while she got dressed and made her way to Mecca, entering the Holy Sanctuary from the east on a Friday in the month of al-Muharram. And Adam entered Mecca from the west.

ON EVE'S PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

Adam lay with Eve on a Friday evening, and she became pregnant with a boy and a girl. But she miscarried in the eighth month, and this was the first miscarriage in the world. Then she became pregnant with another boy and girl, and she was afflicted again, as she was before. . . . Then she became pregnant again with a boy and girl, and when she delivered them, she named them 'Abd Allāh and Amat Allāh. She gave birth to another boy and girl, whom she called 'Abd al-Rahīm and Amat al-Rahīm, and she continued giving birth to boys and girls until she had borne one hundred sets of twins.* After that, she bore Abel and his sister, followed by Cain and his sister, and continued bearing children until they reached 120 boys and girls.

Then they propagated and multiplied.

ON CAIN'S MURDER OF ABEL

Adam called for his two sons, Abel and Cain, whom he loved most of all his children. He told them his story and how he had once entered Paradise, the reason for his expulsion, and other things. Then he ordered them to present an offering to God.

Abel was a shepherd and Cain a farmer. Abel took a fat ram from among his sheep that was finer than all the others and slaughtered it, while Cain presented the most inferior of his produce. A white fire descended from the sky with no heat or smoke, and it burned Abel's offering without burning Cain's, so he became envious and said: "The children of my brother will lord over my children after I die. By God, I will kill him." [It was just as] God said: "And recite thou to them the story of the two sons of Adam truthfully, when they offered a sacrifice, and it was accepted of one of them, and not accepted of the other. 'I will surely slay thee,' said one. 'God accepts only of the God-fearing,' said the other. 'Yet if thou stretchest out thy hand against me, to slay me, I will not stretch out my hand against thee, to slay thee; I fear God, the Lord of all Being.'" (Q 5:27-28)

Then they returned from Minnā, the place where they made their offering, and went to find their father. Abel was walking in front of Cain, who took a rock and struck his brother on the head, killing him. Then he ran away. As God said: "But his soul imposed on him the killing of his brother, so he slew him and became one of the lost ones." (Q 5:30) Cain passed by two crows that had been fighting. One killed the other and then began scratching in the ground with his feet until he had dug a hole to bury the dead crow. Cain told himself that he would not tell God about what happened: "'Woe unto me! Have I failed to be like this crow and hide the body of my brother?' And he became of the regretful." (Q 5:31)

After Adam had waited a long time, he went out to search for his sons and he came upon the slain Abel. This tormented him, and he was seized by intense grief. The trees planted in the earth that had soaked Abel's blood had lost their bloom.

Adam lifted Abel onto his shoulder, weeping, and then buried him. He and Eve wept for forty days, and then God told him to cease, revealing that He would grant Adam a righteous child like Abel who would be the father of the prophets and messengers. Adam's sorrow was dispelled, and so he lay with Eve and she became pregnant with Seth . . . and when she gave birth to him, he had the same qualities and appearance as Abel. When Seth grew up, God sent him a pure

stem from the lotus tree of the seventh heaven and blessed him with many children.

On the History of the Mamluk State*

This state arose in the Egyptian territories and then spread to Syrian lands, extending to the kingdoms in the area of Aleppo and the Euphrates. Then it captured the coastal ports, citadels, and fortresses, and wrested control of the castles of the Ismailis, reaching as far as the borders of the Byzantine kingdom, as the regions of Yemen and the Hijāz pledged allegiance to it.

The Karamanid factions affiliated themselves with the Mamluk State, and the Mongol rulers sought peace with it. Its decrees and commands were carried out as far as Ifrīqiya (the eastern Maghrib) and the surrounding territories, Takrūr (Muslim West Africa) and beyond. And the people in the clime of Nubia obeyed its rule and fell under its protection. Let us begin by recounting the history of the Turks and the reasons why they were conquered (and enslaved).

ON THE HISTORY OF THE TURKS, THEIR ORIGINS, THE
CIRCUMSTANCES OF HOW THEY WERE CONQUERED AND
BROUGHT TO THE KINGS OF ISLAM, AND ON THE RULERS WHO
INCREASED THEIR NUMBERS AND WERE EXCESSIVE IN THEIR
PURSUIT OF THEM, AND PREFERRED THEM ABOVE ALL OTHER
SOLDIERS

We recounted, in our discussion of the Abbasid State, those Turks who became close to the caliphs and who were considered the finest of all soldiers, and whose value was esteemed, and whose name became famous. We also discussed the situation of the Turks under the Fatimid Dynasty during the days of al-Mustansir bi-llāh, their revolts, and how they sometimes fought against Nāsir al-Dawla Ibn Hamdān and sometimes for him.

Then we recounted how Saladin, as well as his brother and son, were among those who took an interest in acquiring Turks. At that time, the slave merchants could only import them clandestinely, acquiring them through theft because they were protected from being

sold publicly.

However, the event that truly led to the capture of Turks and practice of selling them in cities was the emergence of Genghis Khan, the king of the Tatars. For when he seized control of the northern and eastern lands and sent his armies out, they arrived at the lands of the Qipchak and the Alans and battled with them, as we have recounted in our discussion of the history of Genghis Khan's dynasty. So, the children of the Turks and the Qipchaks were sold, and the slave merchants brought them to the cities.

However, the first to greatly increase their numbers, and who went beyond the proper bounds in acquiring them and preferred them over all other soldiers, was the ruler al-Sālih Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, son of the ruler al-Kāmil. As we have recounted, in the year 627 AH (1230 CE), it came to al-Kāmil's attention that his son al-Sālih had purchased a thousand mamluks and usurped the throne. So al-Kāmil punished him by expelling him from Egypt.

When he finally became sultan, he acquired large numbers of mamluks and promoted them over his armies. They remained in his service until he died. When his son, the ruler Tūrānshāh, took over, he treated the mamluks in a hateful way and threatened them, which is what led them to kill him and to seek power for themselves.

ON THE GREAT BATTLE AT 'AYN JĀLŪT BETWEEN THE SULTAN
AL-MUZAFFAR QUTUZ AND THE MUSLIM ARMIES, AGAINST THE
ARMY OF THE MONGOLS; AND ON THE DEFEAT OF THE MONGOLS
AND THE SLAYING OF THEIR GENERAL, KITBUGHĀ NOYAN*

When the Mongols captured the Syrian kingdoms and the rule of the Ayyūbid monarch al-Nāsir Salāh al-Dīn Yūsuf ended in Syria, the general of the Mongol armies, Kitbughā Noyan, sent his envoys to the Mamluk sultan al-Muzaffar Qutuz, demanding his submission and ordering him to prepare to receive Kitbughā.* Qutuz, however, killed all the envoys except for one young boy whom he spared and added to the ranks of his mamluks.

He then prepared for holy war and rode out with the soldiers of Egypt. Added to them were the soldiers of Syria who had left al-Nāsir's army, the Bahriyya amirs, the Shahrazūriyya amirs, and others. He sent his envoy to al-Ashraf Mūsā, the ruler of Homs, who had just returned from meeting the Mongol ruler Hulagu in Aleppo and had been appointed his viceroy over all of Syria, including Aleppo and other territories. Qutuz also sent his envoy to the ruler al-Sa'id, who had been awarded a decree of rule from Hulagu over al-Subayba and

Bāniyās. Qutuz asked them both to join forces with him against the enemy and for their purpose to be united.

So Qutuz's envoy set out and met with al-Sa'id, who cursed him and the one who sent him, saying: "What kind of a man would submit to this boy or ally himself with him?" So the envoy left him and headed to al-Ashraf, who met privately with him and kissed the ground in front of him, by way of venerating the one who sent him. Al-Ashraf then sat Qutuz's envoy upon his own throne and sat down before him in order to hear his message. He said to him: "Kiss the ground for me before our master, Sultan al-Muzaffar Qutuz, and tell him that I am his servant and ally, ready to obey his command. Praise be to God who appointed him to aid this religion!" He promised to fight the Mongols to the death when the battle took place.

The envoy returned and informed Qutuz of what the two rulers had said, and he treated them accordingly after his victory, as we shall recount.

Qutuz gathered his commanders in (the Egyptian town of) al-Sālihiyya and asked them: "Where shall we confront the enemy?" They insisted that the confrontation take place in al-Sālihiyya. Qutuz gave the appearance of agreeing with them but instead rode out the following morning.* He beat the war drums and rode into al-Raml, and the soldiers followed behind him, and not a single one deserted. He rode with his troops until he reached 'Ayn Jālūt (Goliath's Spring), in the land of Canaan.

Kitbughā approached with the Mongol armies and those who had attached themselves to it. They met and fought on Friday, the 25th of Ramadān, in the year 658 AH (September 3, 1260 CE), and Qutuz fought most steadfastly. Someone who witnessed the battle said: "I was behind the sultan Qutuz when the two sides clashed together for the first time. The flank of the sultan's troops was attacked, and part of it fell into disarray. When Qutuz saw this, he flung his helmet off his head and shouted: 'For Islam!' and charged forth, and God gave him victory." The Mongols were routed, put to the sword, and taken prisoner. Kitbughā was among those killed, and the Mongols who were spared were put to flight. The commander Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Bunduqdārī was among those who participated in the battle, and proved himself brave on that day.

Among the Mongols who were imprisoned after the battle was Kitbughā al-Mansūrī, who was a young man at the time. He would go on to rule over Egypt in the year 694 AH (1294 CE) and become known as the Just (al-Ādil). There is a strange story concerning this matter, and we will recount it, God willing, when we discuss the sultanate of al-Ādil Kitbughā.

When the Mongol defeat was complete, the ruler al-Sa'id came to

the sultan Qutuz, seeking protection. He had witnessed the battle from the side of the Mongols. He dismounted from his horse and approached the sultan to kiss his hand, but the sultan kicked him in the mouth, bloodying him. Then one of the sultan's officers came forward and struck off al-Sa'īd's head. He did this as punishment for his reply to the sultan's envoy.

ON THE MURDER OF SULTAN QUTUZ

His murder took place on Saturday, the 15th of Dhū al-Qa'da, in the year 658 AH (October 22, 1260 CE), while some say that it was the seventeenth of the month. When he had put the affairs of Syria in order (following the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt) and determined its kings, viceroys, and principalities, he left Damascus for Egypt. That was on the 16th of Shawwāl (July 27), and when he arrived at the town of al-Qusayr, he went out to go hunting. Meanwhile, the amir Badr al-Dīn al-Isfahānī and a group of others colluded with the commander Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Bunduqdārī to assassinate the sultan. They went out secretly to find him while he was hunting and assassinated him.

It was as though he were the subject of the poet's verse:

He was nothing so much as a sword that found its target
And shattered it, then doubled back upon itself and was shattered

His reign lasted eleven months and seventeen days.

ON THE SULTAN AL-ZĀHIR BAYBARS

He was the fourth of the Mamluk rulers of Egypt, and he was Turkish in origin from the tribe of al-Bir'Alī. He assumed control of Egypt and Syria on the day that the sultan al-Muzaffar Qutuz was killed, and the commanders gathered in the royal tent and sat down before the throne. They discussed the matter of whom they should elevate over the rest as sultan and settled upon Baybars. It is also said that the commander Fāris al-Dīn Aqtāy said: "The only one who should assume the sultanate is he who staked his life to kill the sultan and dared to perform this tremendous feat." Baybars said: "I killed him," and leapt up to sit on the throne. Then the commanders all swore allegiance to him in the order of their rank.

ON THE RETURN OF BAYBARS TO CAIRO

The historian Muhyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir wrote: “Cairo and Egypt had been decked out for the arrival of the sultan Qutuz, and the people were delighted to welcome him back after his great victory. All of a sudden, however, a herald arrived and announced: ‘Hear ye, oh people! May God have mercy upon you! And ask God to have mercy upon the soul of the sultan al-Muzaffar Qutuz! And welcome your new sultan, al-Zāhir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars.’

“The people fell speechless. They were shocked by the severity of the Bahriyya faction and their oppressive and tyrannical methods for dealing with others.* What if they behaved similarly toward the people? But the sultan treated them in such a way that gladdened them, by doing the following. His predecessor Qutuz had instituted a harsh tax program for the year 658 AH (1260 CE), which involved recording the revenues of all properties (*tasqī‘ al-amlāk*) and seizing their alms contributions, confiscating one-third of the household surplus, doubling the alms tax, and levying an additional tax of one dinar upon every person, amounting to a total of six hundred thousand dinars. The sultan Baybars abolished that plan, signing a decree that was proclaimed from all the pulpits. So the people’s hearts were gladdened.”

ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ZĀHIRIYYA MADRASA AND THE ARRANGEMENT OF ITS COURSES

The construction of the Zāhiriyya madrasa—which is on Bayn al-Qasrayn Street in Cairo—commenced at the beginning of Baybars’s reign, on the 8th day of Rabī II, in the year 660 AH (March 2, 1262 CE). Its main gate, antechamber, interior doors, and public elementary school were finished in the year 662 AH (1264 CE), and the construction was only begun once the details of its endowment were settled. The overseer of its construction was the amir Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Yaghmur, and the sultan ordered him not to use any workers for the construction without paying them a salary. The scholars gathered in it on Sunday, the 5th of Safar, in the year 662 (December 8, 1263 CE), and the sultan appointed the instruction of Hanafī jurisprudence to Majd al-Dīn ibn al-‘Adīm, and the instruction of Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence to the judge Taqī al-Dīn ibn Razīn. The chief teacher of Quranic recitation was Kamāl al-Dīn al-Mahallī, and the chief teacher of Prophetic traditions was my own teacher, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Mumin ibn Khalaf al-Dimyātī. Instruction began on that very day in

the presence of the sultan, while feasts were served, and poets recited celebratory poems and were rewarded with robes of honor.

A NOTICE OF THE BIRTH OF THE BOOK'S AUTHOR

On the early morning of Tuesday, the 21st of Dhū 'l-Q'ada, in the year 677 AH (April 5, 1279 CE), the author and compiler of this book was born, the humble servant of God, Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Dāim ibn Munajjā ibn 'Alī ibn Tarr'ād ibn Khattāb ibn Nasr ibn Ismā'il ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ja'far ibn Hilāl ibn al-Husayn ibn Layth ibn Talha ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Siddīq 'Abd Allāh ibn Atīq, the Companion of the Prophet of God (peace and blessings upon him), the son of his Companion, the father of his Companions, the grandfather of his Companion, and the Caliph after him, the "second of the two," Ibn Abī Quhāfa 'Uthmān, may God be pleased with them, ibn Āmir ibn 'Amr ibn Ka'b ibn Sa'd ibn Taym ibn Murra ibn Ka'b ibn Luayy ibn Ghālīb ibn Fihr ibn Mālīk ibn al-Nadr ibn Kināna ibn Khuzayma ibn Mudrika ibn Ilyās ibn Mudar ibn Nizār ibn Maadd ibn Adnān—known as al-Nuwayrī, may God have mercy on him and be pleased with him. His birthplace was in the city of Akhmīm in Upper Egypt, on the date given.

ON THE SULTAN AL-MANSŪR SAYF AL-DĪN QALĀWŪN

He was the seventh sultan of the Mamluk State and was of pure Qipchak descent, from the tribe of Burjogli. He was one of the mamluks of the amir Alā al-Dīn Aqsunqur, who bought him for one thousand dinars, which is how he became known as the Thousander (al-Alfi). It so happened that his master died in the year 647 AH (1249 CE), and Qalāwūn joined the sultan's mamluks along with his comrades, who were known as the 'Alā'iyya (named after their master and manumitter).

Qalāwūn had been among the group of Bahriyya mamluks who had fled Egypt after the murder of (their leader) Fāris al-Dīn Aqtāy. The vicissitudes of time, however, brought him to this position as ruler of Egypt and Syria and their associated territories. He assumed the throne of the sultanate in the Citadel of the Mountain on Sunday, the 20th of Rajab, 678 AH (November 26, 1279 CE). He exacted the oath of allegiance from the amirs, notables, and all those who were customarily asked to do so. His name was proclaimed from the mosque pulpits, and letters were sent to Damascus and all of the other

cities announcing the news.

Among the first acts promulgated by Qalāwūn when he assumed the sultanate was to abolish the waterwheel tax (*zakāt al-dawlaba*) in Egypt, which the people had opposed.* He also set free the amir ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Afram and appointed him viceroy. He held this position for a short time and then asked permission to resign, and it was granted. Qalāwūn then appointed his own mamluk, the amir Husām al-Dīn Turuntāy, to the position.

ON THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEDICATION OF THE AL-MANSŪRĪ HOSPITAL

When the sultan Qalāwūn saw the Sālihiyya tomb (that he had built for his wife, Bint Sayf al-Dīn Karmūn), he ordered the construction of his own complex, comprising a tomb, a madrasa, a hospital, and an elementary school for boys. For this purpose, the Dār al-Qutbiyya palace was purchased along with the surrounding buildings on Bayn al-Qasrayn Street using the sultan’s private funds. He compensated the residents of Dār al-Qutbiyya by giving them the Emerald Palace, and they moved from the former to the latter on the 24th of Rabī I, 682 AH (June 22, 1283 CE).

The sultan appointed the amir ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Shujā’ī as supervisor of the construction, and he displayed such assiduousness and attention to detail during the construction as had never been heard of before. The complex was built in the shortest time and completed in 683 AH (1284 CE). Were someone to see this grand building and hear that it had been built in such a short time, he would surely deny it!

When the hospital was finished, the sultan came to see it along with the nobles, judges, and scholars. Someone who witnessed this told me that the sultan called for a goblet of cordial, drank it, and said: “I hereby bequeath this to those of my stature and those beneath me,” and he bequeathed it to master and servant, soldier and commander and vizier, old and young, freeborn and slave, man and woman. And he decreed that all patients leaving the hospital receive clothing during their convalescence, and those who died would be shrouded and buried. Physicians, ophthalmologists, surgeons, and bonesetters were appointed to treat the shortsighted, the sick, the wounded, the broken-boned, men and women. Attendants and custodians were appointed to take care of the patients, cleaning their rooms, washing their clothes, and bathing them, and they were paid well. Beds, carpets, mattresses, mats, pillows, and blankets were produced, with each patient receiving a complete set of bedding. Group of patients

were placed in specialized wards with running water in most of them. And spaces were set aside for preparing food, drink, medicines, pastes, and powders. There was a place for the head physician to sit and give lectures in medicine that the students would find useful. And the hospital's services were not limited to the patients residing within it; medicines and food and drink were also provided to the needy living in their homes.

ON THE FIRST REIGN OF THE SULTAN AL-NĀSIR MUHAMMAD IBN QALĀWŪN

He is the ninth ruler of the Mamluk State in Egypt. His mother was Ashlūn Khātūn, daughter of Suktāy ibn Qarājīn ibn Jīghān Nuwīn. He is the ruler of the realms of Egypt and Syria, the coastal territories and the regions around Aleppo and the Euphrates, as well as other fortresses, strongholds, castles, and hinterlands.

Al-Nāsir assumed the throne in Egypt and occupied the Citadel of the Mountain after the assassination of his brother, Sultan al-Ashraf Kh'Alīl. That was on the 14th of Muharram, 693 AH (December 15, 1293 CE), and he was nine years old at the time. He gained the throne through an agreement between the Mansūrī commanders and those that remained of the Sālihiyya Najmiyya corps. It was decided that the commander Zayn al-Dīn Kitbughā would be the viceroy and that 'Alam al-Dīn Sanjar al-Shujā'ī would serve as the chief state minister. Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Mansūrī was appointed the executive secretary (*dawādār*).

INFLATION AND PLAGUE

In the year 695 AH (1295–96 CE), prices rose in Egypt, and there was widespread plague. The price of wheat rose to 167 dirhams per *irdabb* (about 154 lbs.), and it was said that it even reached 180 dirhams. This was followed by a terrible plague, and prices rose for every type of foodstuff. A single chicken cost twenty dirhams. I heard a story that a man went to buy some chickens to cook for someone who was ill at home. He weighed them and found that they weighed the same as the silver coins that he bought them with! * Melons sold for four fine silver dirhams per pound while a single quince cost thirty. This was the situation in Cairo. However, in Upper Egypt, in the environs of Qūs, the price of wheat did not rise beyond its price of 95 dirhams per *irdabb*.

The rise in prices was followed by a terrible plague in Cairo. Corpses taken out of the city were counted each day and they exceeded seven hundred, and this reflects only the bodies leaving the city from one of its many gates. The people were unable to bury the dead in single graves, so they would dig large pits and stack the corpses within them—men and women, children between their legs—and then they would cover them with earth. The corpses that were not well buried were eaten by the dogs. Meanwhile, the people who lived ate the dogs.

THE OBITUARY OF AL-NUWAYRĪ'S FATHER

And in this year, my father died—may God have mercy upon him—Tāj al-Dīn Abū Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Abī ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Dāim ibn Munajjā ibn ‘Alī al-Bakrī al-Tamīmī al-Qurashī, known as al-Nuwayrī. The rest of his lineage has already been recounted in the notice of my birth in the year 677 AH (1279 CE). He died—may God have mercy upon him—before the evening prayer on Thursday, the 22nd of Dhū ‘l-Hijja in the year 699 AH (September 7, 1300), in the Sālīhiyya Najmiyya madrasa, in the Mālīkī instruction hall. His illness had begun on Wednesday, the 14th of the month. He was born in Cairo in a madrasa known as Manāzil al-‘Izz in the year 618 AH (1221 CE). He died—may God have mercy upon him—without neglecting his prayers; he performed his ritual ablutions four times before the afternoon prayers on the day of his death, and he had an incurable disease, then he prayed the afternoon prayer standing up. He died before the call to evening prayer on that day. His last words, after calling God's blessings down upon me, were the pronouncement of the two testimonies of faith. Then God took him, and he was buried the next day, Friday . . . in the mausoleum of the chief judge Zayn al-Dīn al-Mālīkī, may God have mercy on him and me.

ON THE EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRED IN DAMASCUS FOLLOWING THE MONGOL VICTORY AGAINST THE MAMLUK ARMY IN THE BATTLE OF HOMS (1299)

The news of the Islamic army's defeat reached Damascus and was confirmed on Saturday, the 1st of Rabī II, 699 (December 26, 1299 CE). Whoever had the means to travel left for Egypt on that day,

including the chief judges Imām al-Dīn al-Shāfi‘ī and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Zawāwī al-Mālikī, Ibn al-Shirāzī, the governors of Damascus and its countryside, the city’s market supervisor, and many other people who were able to emigrate. On Saturday night, the prisoners held in the jail by the Small Gate burned down the door and escaped. There were about 150 of them, and they proceeded to the Gate of the Water Trough, broke its locks, and went through it. The city was left with no protector or defender, so the notables of Damascus met on Sunday in the Umayyad Mosque and decided to set off to meet the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan to ask for the security of the inhabitants of the city.

The chief judge and preacher Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamāa set out along with Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (and many others). They left after the noon prayers on Monday, the 3rd of the month, and met with Ghāzān in the village of al-Nabak, finding him on the march. The notables dismounted and some of them kissed the ground, while Ghazan halted his horse and a group of other Mongols dismounted. The translator interpreted between the notables and Ghazan, and they requested the safety of the people of Damascus. The one who addressed Ghazan in the name of the people of Damascus was Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn al-Shirājī.

Ghazan replied: “The safety that you have come to request was granted and announced before you arrived.” They then presented the food that they had with them, but he did not accept it. He gave them permission to return and so they did, arriving following the afternoon prayer on Friday, the 7th of the month. No prayer was offered to the sultan on that Friday.

On Thursday, the 6th of the month, four Mongols had arrived in Damascus, having been sent by Ghazan. They were accompanied by al-Sharīf al-Qummī, who had set out with three other Damascenes to see Ghazan before the large delegation. He returned with the notice of clemency for the people of Damascus.

Then, following the Friday prayer, the amir Ismā‘īl arrived with another company of Mongols. They encamped in al-Bustān al-Zāhiri on al-Qābūn Road. On Saturday Ismā‘īl rode into Damascus and came to the sermon chamber of the Umayyad Mosque to announce the edict from Ghazan. One of his companions read it, and the muezzin al-Mujāhid delivered it to the congregation. It began as follows:

“By the power of God Sublime, let it be known to the Chiefs of Ten Thousand, One Thousand, and One Hundred,* and to all of our victorious soldiers who include Mongols, Tajiks, Georgians, and others from among the peoples subject to our rule, that God enlightened our hearts with the light of Islam and guided us to the religion of the Prophet (the greatest blessings upon him). As God said: ‘Is he whose bosom God has expanded for Islam, so that he follows a light from his Lord, (as he who disbelieves)? Then woe unto those whose hearts

hardened against the remembrance of God. Such are in plain error.” (Q 39:22) [. . .]*

After the edict was read, the people were somewhat reassured. The Mongols sat in the sermon chamber until the afternoon prayer and then returned to their camp in al-Bustān al-Zāhiri. Meanwhile, the Mamluk commander Arjuwash had locked the gates to the Citadel of Damascus and secluded himself there from the beginning of this episode.

The people of Damascus gathered on Sunday, the 9th of the month, in al-Qaymariyya and gathered horses, mules, and other goods so as to appease the Mongols. Ghazan encamped in the Ghūta plain along with his troops, and they killed a group of villagers.

On Tuesday morning a memorandum arrived from the Mongol viceroy Ismāʿil ordering the scholars, shaykhs, and notables to go to the citadel to discuss its surrender with the viceroy Arjuwash. If he refused, the army would enter the city and plunder it, spilling much blood. A large group gathered at the gate of the citadel and asked Arjuwash to send them a messenger. He refused and cursed them mightily, saying: “I have received a letter from the sultan, which says that he has gathered his army in Gaza and defeated the Mongol raiding party that pursued him. He will be arriving shortly with the army.”

On Friday, the 14th of the month, Ghazan’s name was pronounced as sovereign on the pulpits of Damascus, using the following honorifics and epithets which were commanded: “Our Master, the Sultan, the Grandest Ruler, Sultan of Islam and the Muslims, Victor of the Earthly World and the Hereafter, Mahmud Ghazan.” A group of Mongols prayed in the sermon chamber and following the prayer, the commander Sayf al-Dīn Qipchak arrived with Ismāʿil and they ascended to the gallery of the muezzins. A large group of common people gathered below, and a proclamation was read investing Qipchak with the governorship of all of Syria, including the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, their surrounding areas, and other regions. He was given the power to appoint judges, prefects, preachers, and other officials. Then the crowd was showered with gold and silver coins, and the people celebrated the governorship of Qipchak, thinking erroneously that he would treat them well.

On Saturday, the fifteenth of the month, the plundering of al-Sālihiyya began, including its mausoleums, madrasas, and other properties. The Mongols then went to the village of al-Mizza, plundered it, and cursed its inhabitants. They did the same in the village of Dāriyā and killed a number of its people, who also killed a group of Mongols.

The shaykh Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya went to see Ghazan on

Thursday while he was in Tall Rāhit. He went in to complain about what had taken place following his guarantee of security but did not end up doing so, for it was said to him: “If you complain, then he will kill some Mongols, and that will cause a disturbance among them that will come back to harm the people of Damascus.” So Ibn Taymiyya changed his complaint into a plea and then left Ghazan and met with his two viziers Saad al-Dīn and Rashīd al-Dīn to discuss the matter. They said that some of the Mongol generals had not received any war booty from the conquest of Damascus and had to be placated in some way, and the vizier ordered the release of some prisoners.

Conditions worsened for the people of Damascus, whose assets were seized through the end of Rabī II and the beginning of Jum‘ādā I 699 AH (January and February 1300 CE), and the city was saddled with a burden that its people could not bear. Taxes were levied upon them, and prices rose throughout this period.

On Friday, the 12th of Jum‘ādā I (February 4, 1300 CE), Ghazan returned to the lands of the East, and Qutlūshāh was appointed his vice regent in Damascus. [Several weeks later, after much discord and strife,] the Mongols returned en masse to the lands of the East on the 8th of Rajab, 699 AH (March 30, 1300 CE), having heard that the Mamluk sultan was intent to return to Syria and had deployed his army. None of the Syrian citadels were conquered by Ghazan; they had all resisted him, following the example of the Citadel of Damascus. Their governors held fast to them, giving the excuse that they could not give them up until after the Citadel of Damascus had surrendered. In that way they were all saved.

The Friday sermon was given in the name of the Mamluk sultan again on the 17th of Rajab (April 8); his name had been absent from it for one hundred days. On that day the taverns were shuttered, their contents were spilled, and their wineskins split. Ibn Taymiyya and his companions took charge of that.

ON THE ARMY’S DEPLOYMENT TO UPPER EGYPT TO CONFRONT THE BEDOUINS [FEBRUARY 1302 CE]

The Bedouins of southern Egypt had recently become more vicious and daring, cutting off the roads to travelers. Their ambitions were riding high after the battle with the Mongol Ilkhan Ghazan. So the sultan’s viceroy, Sayf al-Dīn Sallār, together with the amir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshnikir and a large group of officers, set off to confront the Bedouins in the beginning of Jum‘ādā II 701 (February 1302 CE). The army split into three groups: one in the east, one in the west, and

one flanking the western sector, which borders the oases. In this way they set up an encircling perimeter throughout the southern province—just like a hunting ring (*halqa*)—and the Bedouins were trapped in the middle, with swords coming at them from every direction.

The countryside was thus set in order, and the people were reassured. There was no longer any fear, and stability reigned, for the Bedouins could scarcely express a word of opposition toward the government. Much of their stock was confiscated: 5,000 horses, 20,000 camels, 100,000 sheep, and some large quantity of cows, buffaloes, and donkeys. They also lost many swords and spears. The army returned at the end of Sha‘bān (April 1302).

In this year I was ordered to set out for Damascus to manage the sultan’s properties in Syria. My appointment was drafted on the 12th of Jum‘ādā I, 701 AH (January 13, 1302 CE), and it was composed and penned by the esteemed clerk Bahā al-Dīn ibn Salāma, a scribe of the scroll (*kātib al-darj*). The letter of appointment also contained the royal script of the sultan al-Nāsir. I set off for Damascus in Jum‘ādā II, arrived in the same month, and took up the office to which I was appointed. That was the first time I had ever come to the city.

In this year the great scholar Sharaf al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī al-Hanb‘Alī was martyred in Baalbek, on Thursday, the 11th of Ramadān (May 10, 1302 CE), at eight o’clock in the morning. On the previous Friday, he had gone with his servant to the library of the Hanb‘Alī Mosque in Baalbek to remove his own books from those that belonged to the endowment. A poor man named Mūsā—who was unknown in the town and thought to be Egyptian—entered the library and struck shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn on the head with a cane several times. Then he took out a small knife and wounded him in the head, and when the shaykh tried to guard himself with his hand, the man stabbed him there as well. Then he was seized, dragged to the governor of Baalbek, and beaten. He began to speak in gibberish and was imprisoned.

As for the shaykh, he was taken to his home and his friends came to speak with him, as was his custom. He completed his fast on that day and then became feverish, and the illness intensified until he died on the aforementioned date. He was over eighty years old, may God have mercy on him. He transmitted hadiths from various authorities, including Ibn al-Zabīdī, and he occupied himself with (redacting) al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* through all of its channels. He exactly edited his own copy, giving each channel its own abbreviation and adding correct marginal annotations. I have copied al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* from his model seven times, and I edited it just as he did, and collated it against his own model, which was the model upon which I performed my audition with (my teachers of Prophetic traditions), al-Hajjār and Wazīra.*

On Friday, the 11th of Safar, 702 AH (October 5, 1302 CE), our teacher the chief judge Taqī al-Dīn Muhammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Wahb al-Qushayrī—who was known as Ibn Daqīq al-Īd—passed away. He was born in the Hijāz on the 25th of Sha‘bān 625 AH (July 30, 1228 CE) and grew up in Qūs. He studied there under his father and excelled, and he was one of the most revered people I have known in terms of his piousness, erudition, and asceticism. He was tremendously careful about matters of ritual purity—even going to excessive lengths in this regard. He was appointed chief judge and assumed the office, then stepped down of his own accord. He was asked to return but refused, despite the fact that many high-ranking officers came to him and asked him to do so. Then one of his children played a trick on him and said: “If you continue to refuse, ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn Miskīn may be appointed in your place,” to which Ibn Daqīq al-Īd responded: “Now I *must* accept the appointment.”*

Ibn Daqīq was the one who changed the robes of the judges from silk to wool. Before him, judges would receive robes made of Ganjī silk and cotton.*

A WONDROUS BEAST APPEARS IN THE NILE

In this year, a strange beast appeared in the Nile. It is the animal known as the hippopotamus, and it comes onto the land to eat clover and then returns to the river. On Thursday, the 4th of Jum‘ādā II, 702 AH (January 24, 1303 CE), it was hunted in the Delta area of al-Manūfiyya.

Its qualities are the following: the color of the hippopotamus is similar to the water buffalo. It is hairless and has ears like a camel’s. Its vagina is like that of a she-camel, which it covers with a tail that is about a handspan and a half in length and looks like the tail of a fish. Its neck is as thick as a large stuffed sack, and its mouth is as wide as a bow for carding cotton. It has four tusks, each of which is less than a handspan in length and two fingers wide. Inside its mouth there are twenty-eight molars, incisors, and other teeth in the shape of carved chess pawns. The height of its belly from the ground is about a cubit (2.5 ft.), and the skin of its legs—between the knees and the hooves—resembles the wrinkled yellow belly of a serpent. Its hoof is about as wide as a plate, with four nails like a camel’s, and its back is about two and a half cubits (6.25 ft.) in width. Its total length, from mouth to tail, is fifteen feet.

Three stomachs were found in the hippopotamus's gut, and its flesh was red and oily like a fish.* Its hide was four fingers thick; no sword could slice through it. When the animal was hunted, it was skinned and its hide was brought to me when I was with the sultan in the Citadel of the Mountain. Five camels had to share the burden of carrying the hide because of its great weight. A single camel could not carry it for more than an hour at a time. When the hide was brought before the sultan, it was stuffed with straw and placed on its feet.

This animal had not previously been seen in the Nile in Egypt, but rather dwelled in the lands of the Nūba. The Nubians would make whips out of its hide with which to drive their camels. These are black whips that, when dipped in oil, are nearly impossible to cut. And God knows best.

ON THE BATTLE OF MARJ AL-SUFFAR, BETWEEN THE MAMLUKS AND THE MONGOLS

The Mongol forces who had survived the defeat at the battle of Urd joined up with the Mongol general Qutlūshāh and informed him that the sultan had not left Egypt and that only the Syrian forces of the Mamluk army were currently in Syria. So Qutlūshāh approached Syria with the Mongol army. The Mamluk forces in Hama retreated to the outskirts of Damascus, while the commanders of the Syrian and Egyptian forces who were in Damascus met and decided to fall back to the Suffar River and set up camp there until the sultan arrived with his forces from Egypt. They also decided to face the Mongol army if the sultan did not arrive in time, and moved their women and children to the Citadel of Damascus.

The troops assembled together in Maydān al-Hasā on Wednesday, the 28th of Sha'bān, 702 AH (April 17, 1303 CE). The people of Damascus went out in the streets in a panic, and people from the surrounding towns and villages fled to the city in fright. The noble families of Damascus departed the city on that day, some of them moving to the fortresses and others going to Egypt.

I was in Damascus on that day and left after preparing my battle armor. I went to join the troops and found the refugees from other towns gathering in great crowds at the gates of Damascus. They had neglected their possessions and children. I arrived at the army encampment in Maydān al-Hasā only after dark and found that they had already departed for Marj al-Suffar. On the next day, I followed the army and we encamped in that spot for two days (Thursday and Friday).

On the night before Saturday, the 2nd of Ramadān (April 20, 1303 CE), the military police made the rounds of the troops and informed them that the enemy had drawn near. They told everyone to remain in a state of preparedness throughout the night, and when the enemy attacked they should mount their horses and ride to the meeting point at the village of Majja near Khirbat al-Lusūs. We turned in, and each one of us—commander and subordinate alike—spent the night in his armor, clutching the reins of his horse.

I was in the company of my friend, the amir Alā al-Dīn Mughultāy, one of the officers of the military band in Damascus. The reins of our horses remained in our hands until dawn, when we prayed and mounted our steeds. The troops stood in formation until the sun rose that Saturday, and then God sent a strong rain for about two hours, after which the sun reappeared. We remained on our horses until noon and then the Mongols arrived, like a “cloak of darkest night,” and the sultan arrived with the army from Egypt within the hour.*

The blessed battle took place on Saturday, the 2nd of Ramadān, 702 AH (April 20, 1303 CE), and the defeat of the Mongols was complete by Sunday afternoon. When the sultan al-Nāsir arrived at Marj al-Suffar, near Shaqhab, he arranged his army in the center of the battle order, with the Caliph Abū al-Rabī Sulaymān (al-Mustakfī I) behind him. In the service of the sultan was his vice-regent, the amir Sayf al-Dīn Sallār, and the Master of the Household, Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshnikir (and several other commanders), along with the royal Mamluks.

On the right wing was the amir Husām al-Dīn Lājīn and other commanders, along with the Bedouin auxiliary force. On the left wing was the amir Badr al-Dīn Baktāsh al-Fakhrī, the Master of the Armory, along with Shams al-Dīn Qarā-Sunqur al-Mansūrī, the vice-regent in Aleppo (and other commanders). I was serving in the left wing.

The Mongols advanced, led by Qutlūshāh, and they numbered one hundred thousand men, comprising Mongols, Georgians, Armenians, and others. When they reached Kiswa, they arranged their cavalry into a squadron beneath the mountain called Kanaf al-Misrī, and attacked the right wing of the Mamluk army, striking it with nearly all of their forces. It was thrown into disarray and its forces put up a strong fight. . . . About one thousand cavalymen were martyred, among them both Mamluk and non-Mamluk soldiers in the commanders' units. Others were wounded, such as the amir Sayf al-Dīn Burulghay al-Ashrafī, and so the sultan made the right wing a rearguard behind the center until he fought the Mongols back.

As for the left wing, it was met by the general Mūlāy* and a company of Mongol forces, but they were unable to face our soldiers. So Mūlāy fled on that afternoon with about twenty thousand

cavalrymen after only a short period of fighting. Some members of the Islamic army followed them and the Mongols returned, but then night fell, isolating the two sides from one another. The Mongols retreated to the mountain and lit fires, while the Islamic troops encircled them and remained there throughout the night. On the following morning, which was Sunday, the 3rd of Ramadān (April 21, 1303 CE), the Islamic army advanced to the mountain and began tightening the noose around the Mongol forces. From time to time, a squadron of their boldest warriors would descend the mountain and engage one of our battalions, and it would be repulsed brutally. This day resembled a siege rather than a pitched battle.

The situation remained in this state until noon, at which point the amir Sayf al-Dīn Asandamur Kurji opened up a gap for the Mongols in the left wing. When they saw it, they lost no time in fleeing through it, breaking up into two groups. . . . As they fled, the Islamic army attacked, annihilating them, taking many prisoners, and pursuing the remaining forces throughout the day and into the night.

On Monday, the 4th of Ramadān (April 22nd), the sultan summoned the amirs Sayf al-Dīn Sallār and ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak, the treasurer, and several soldiers to follow in their retinue, and they rode to Damascus, entering it on Tuesday morning along with the caliph. He stayed at the Striped Palace (al-Qasr al-Ablaq), and then the citadel . . . remaining in Damascus until the 2nd of Shawwāl (May 20). He then returned to Cairo, entering it on the 23rd of Shawwāl (June 10). He rode through the city and went to stay at the Mansūriyya madrasa, so as to visit the grave of his father, the sultan al-Mansūr.

The people had celebrated greatly in anticipation of his arrival. Cairo was decorated in a way that had never been seen before, and the decorations remained from the time that the amir Badr al-Dīn Baktūt arrived bearing the announcement of good news on the 10th of Ramadān until after the sultan’s arrival by several days.

AN EARTHQUAKE

At sunrise on Thursday, the 23rd of Dhū l-Hijja, in the year 702 AH (August 8, 1303 CE), a great earthquake struck Cairo and the rest of Egypt, and [was also felt] in Damascus and throughout Syria, its coastline, and mountains. It was centered primarily on Egypt and destroyed a number of minarets (and other buildings). In Alexandria it caused tremendous damage, destroying most of the minarets and one of the markets. In Safad it also had a great impact, collapsing one side of its citadel. In Acre the sea receded beyond the Tower of Flies (a very significant distance) and revealed all sorts of things that people

had thrown into the sea when the Muslims were laying siege to Acre.* The inhabitants of the city lost no time in rushing in to gather what now lay exposed to them. Then the water came back like a mountain, and they all drowned. The water reached almost as far inland as Tall al-Fudūl.

Because of the earthquake's magnitude, many of the common people recorded accounts of it and they continue to talk about it to the present time.

ON THE NĀSIRIYYA MADRASA

In the beginning of this year (703 AH / 1303 CE), the Nāsiriyya madrasa and mausoleum were opened. The madrasa's professors and jurists were appointed along with the mausoleum's Quran reciters, and the chief hadith instructor began teaching in the mausoleum's portico.

The appointed professors were as follows: the chief judge Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī sat with the students of Mālikī law in the southern hall, as per the stipulation of the endowment deed. Chief Judge Shams al-Dīn Ahmad al-Surūjī sat in the western hall with the Hanafis, and Chief Judge Sharaf al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Harrānī taught the Hanb'Alis in the eastern hall. This latter arrangement was in violation of the endower's stipulation, for he had indicated that the eastern hall should be for the Hanafis and the western hall for the Hanb'Alis. Perhaps this was originally an unintentional mistake, but it would come to be criticized, as we will recount.

Each law school occupied its specified location according to the wishes of the endower. The judge Sadr al-Dīn Muhammad ibn al-Murahhal and the Shāfi'ī school occupied the northern hall, and the amir 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Baghd'ādī, the director of government (*wazīr al-dawla wa-mudabbirihā*), attended his classes.

The chief judge Zayn al-Dīn had prepared the endowment deed for the madrasa, giving himself financial oversight over the school and the mausoleum for the rest of his life, then passing control on to his children and their descendants, and then finally to the [future] Mālikī chief judge. He also stipulated that the teaching in the Mālikī hall would fall to himself and his children. He prepared the deed in this way and the sultan certified it.

This disturbed Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn 'Ubāda, who had been brought into the sultan's administration as an inspector by the abovementioned chief judge, Zayn al-Dīn. So Ibn 'Ubāda went to the sultan and explained the details of the endowment to him, and said: "The chief judge has done this for himself, his children, and their descendants, and he hasn't left anything for the sultan and his freed

slaves.” He suggested to the sultan that he change the endowment deed and place financial control in the hands of his freedman, the eunuch Shujā’ al-Dīn ‘Anbar al-Lālā, and after him to other respectable members of the sultan’s former slaves, then to the slaves of his father (the late sultan Qalāwūn). This the sultan did, voiding the previous deed and executing the second one.

I asked Shihāb al-Dīn ibn ‘Ubāda about the reason that impelled him to wrest control away from the chief judge and transfer it to someone else. Ibn ‘Ubāda replied: “He gave control and teaching privileges to himself and his children after him, and didn’t give me a share. Nor did he give me a position, even though I had asked that he make me an inspector as part of the donor’s conditions. He was stingy at my expense, so I stripped control away from him and his children.”

I thought it necessary to provide a summary of the endowment deed for the school and the mausoleum. . . . And what led me to do so in this book—despite the length [of the deed] and its departure from my historical theme—are the similar cases in which other old endowment deeds have been concealed after the pledge to uphold their conditions, and financial supervisors and overseers have traded them between each other and taken control of the endowments and changed their expenditures in violation of the conditions of their donors. . . . Second, what led me to do this was what happened in this very school from the outset, despite the fact that its donor (the sultan al-Nāsir) was alive—may God immortalize his reign—and despite the need to supervise it and appoint chief judges and great scholars, nobles, and jurists to teach in it, there were still many cases of violations against the donor’s conditions. The overseer did not fulfill the donor’s stipulations, despite the availability of funds well beyond the requirements of the stipulations.

This all became apparent after the death of the financial controller—the eunuch Shujā’ al-Dīn, in the year 724 AH (1324 CE)—when the endowment deed emerged. It is possible that the abovementioned controller did not do this willfully after having inspected the conditions, but rather out of disregard and neglect and ignorance, and a lack of scrutiny over that which was entrusted to him. Once control of the institution passed on from him to his household and ended up in the hands of one who was scrupulous in both word and deed, that individual executed the madrasa’s affairs according to the donor’s stipulations, and spent its funds on its actual expenses.

The Budget of the Nāsiriyya Madrasa

Monthly Disbursements

Spent for the supervisor (*nāzīr*)

Mausoleum’s imam

Shaykh al-Hadith
 Mausoleum's Quran reciters
 Public visitors to the mausoleum
 Eight muezzins (two senior, six junior)
 Two custodians for the mausoleum
 Three upholsterers
 600 servants from among the freedmen of al-Nāsir
 Mausoleum gatekeeper
 Funds for olive oil, candles, sundries, plates, glasses, cups, etc.
 4,000

Professors, teaching assistants, and students*

Madrasa imam

100 custodians for madrasa

Librarian

Gatekeeper for madrasa

Cattle driver*

Total monthly expenses

10,000 dinars

The four teaching halls of the madrasa along with the downstairs and upstairs dormitory rooms, the vestibule adjoining the northern hall, and all the adjoining buildings are endowed for use by professors, teaching assistants, law students, and anyone devoted to the noble pursuit of knowledge, according to all four [Sunni] legal rites, as well as the prayer leader, the muezzins, custodians, gatekeeper, and others. The professors, assistants, law students, and prayer leaders live in the madrasa's dormitory rooms so as to devote themselves to their studies. Each one of them performs his religious duties in this madrasa, just like the daily visitors and those who come for prayer and other obligations. All Muslims have freedom of access to it, which is protected by law. . . . This became the norm in all other colleges of law.

The superintendent should appoint a certain number of teaching assistants and students to each professor according to his judgment. Every teaching assistant is responsible to the members of his legal rite. He reviews the students, provides explanations on lessons for those who need further assistance, corrects assignments, and kindles the interest of students in their studies. He may not prevent any student from requesting further elucidation or repetition, nor should he approach any student outside his purview except for some obvious purpose. Every student should devote himself to the legal subjects that he has chosen and which his professor considers to be appropriate to an education within his legal rite. The student must explore every difficult aspect of this material and go over it repeatedly. The professor must oversee his students and urge them constantly to busy themselves with their work. He also should assign a prefect from among the students, conferring upon him such powers as he deems

appropriate.

A librarian must also be appointed who safeguards the books in the college's library. He should keep a record of every book that is checked out to be used for study so that the books are not lost from the college.

In the endowment deed, there is also a certification authorized by the chief judge Shams al-Dīn Ahmad al-Surūjī al-Hanafī that states that the incoming superintendent should be a Mālikī. The donor also stipulated that everyone employed by the endowment must find a replacement for himself in such cases as travel or illness. It is also stated that professors, students, and teaching assistants are entitled to a holiday during the months of Rajab, Sha'bān, Ramadān, and the ten blessed days of Dhū l-Hijja, as is the custom in similar institutions.

When the endowment deed was finalized and the college was completed, and the professors and teaching assistants and students began their courses of instruction, and every position mentioned in the deed was duly filled, the superintendent [paid everyone their stipulated salary] . . . but reduced the student stipends by three months' pay [presumably to account for their holiday], and this situation remained for a long time.

It so happened that when I was overseeing the Bureau of the Sultan's Private Fisc in Cairo (in 1304–9), I came to live in the Nāsiriyya madrasa. I looked over the proceeds of the endowment in Cairo and elsewhere and saw that it was far more abundant than the monthly expenses by a good margin. I took up this matter, and it led to the superintendent's paying the full amount without docking it by three months. This continued until the death of the eunuch Shujā' al-Dīn, the superintendent of the endowment in 724 AH (1324 CE), when he was replaced by the amir Sayf al-Dīn Arghūn al-Nāsirī, the sultan's vice-regent. He divulged the contents of the endowment, made it public, and carried out its stipulations exactly.

A HORSE PLAGUE

In 703 AH (1303–4 CE), a great plague descended upon the horses of Syria, threatening to finish them all off. Most of the people's horses perished. At the time I was living in Damascus and owned ten or more fine chargers. They all died and I had to buy a new horse to ride. Prior to the plague, horses were plentiful and easy to find in Syria. Their price had fallen, and when the Mongols fled after the battle of Marj al-Suffar, their draft horses were sold on the battlefield for five dirhams apiece. Then the prices started rising, and the Mongols' horses were sold in Damascus for thirty dirhams each. After the plague, the prices

rose even further in Damascus because of the scarcity of horses.

In Ramadān of that year (April 1304 CE), I left Damascus to serve the sultan in Egypt, leaving behind the management of his private properties [in Syria]. I arrived in Cairo on Sunday, the 27th of Ramadān (May 3, 1304 CE), during the afternoon, and I spent the rest of the day managing the Bureau of the Sultan's Private Fisc, the Mansūri hospital, and the other pious bequests of the late sultan al-Mansūr. Before sunset, the accounts of daily salaries had been forwarded to me for consideration.

ON THE IBN TAYMIYYA AFFAIR, AND WHAT TRANSPIRED WITH
RESPECT TO THE HANBALI SCHOOL OF LAW, AND ON IBN
TAYMIYYA'S IMPRISONMENT, AND ALL THAT HAPPENED TO HIM
UNTIL HE WAS FINALLY FREED

This series of events began in the year 705 AH and concluded at the end of the year 709 AH (1306–10 CE). It was preceded and brought about by incidents that had taken place in Cairo and Damascus. I have decided to recount the whole affair and explain its causes from start to finish without interpolating any other events, even while passing from one year to the next.

The instigating cause of this affair, which necessitated summoning the aforementioned shaykh Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya to Egypt, and to which I was present as a witness from the very beginning, was as follows. There was a student living in the aforementioned Nāsiriyya madrasa in Cairo, whose name was 'Abd al-Rahmān al-'Aynūsī. I was at the madrasa at the time, along with the chief judge Zayn al-Dīn al-Mālikī and some others. It so happened that I was meeting with the judge Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Adlān al-Kinānī al-Shāfi'ī in my residence at the Nāsiriyya madrasa one night, as he also lived there and worked as a teaching assistant. The student 'Abd al-Rahmān came to us with a legal opinion written by Ibn Taymiyya, from whose hand he had taken it. He commenced to describe the shaykh and the range of his eloquence and knowledge, saying that this was one of many legal opinions. He did not mean to harm the shaykh by showing us the document but rather to spread the word of his virtue. So the judge Ibn Adlān took the opinion from him and read it, and it began as follows:

“In the name of God the Beneficent, the Merciful. What do the esteemed jurists clearly state—may God be pleased with them all—with regard to what a human being must believe and follow as a Muslim, on the matter of what is contained in the physical copies of the Quran: Is it God's eternal word or just an expression of it and not

the word itself? Is it created or eternal? And when God says: ‘The Merciful sits upon the Throne’ (Q 20:5), is that an act of sitting in reality or not? And is God’s speech formed of letters and sounds or is His speech an ever-present attribute? And if a human being follows the Quran according to its apparent meaning without further interpretation, and says, ‘I believe in it, just as it was revealed,’ is this enough? Or is further interpretation necessary? The questioner is a confused man who does not know anything, and his question seeks an easy answer that he will be able to follow and imitate. Give us your legal opinion, may God have mercy upon you.”

*[Ibn Taymiyya’s response occupies several pages and is quoted in its entirety by al-Nuwayrī. In it he replies to his questioner’s request for a clear explication of some of the most divisive topics in Islamic theology. Ibn Taymiyya’s views, which were controversial at the time, included the position that it was illegitimate to interpret the Quran in a manner inconsistent with the opinions of the very earliest authorities. Furthermore, he held that God’s attributes were absolutely real, not metaphorical, and unlike human attributes.]**

When the judge Ibn Adlān read this legal opinion, he denounced parts of it and showed it to the chief judge Zayn al-Dīn al-Mālikī, who said: “I must be certain that this handwriting belongs to Ibn Taymiyya. If it is confirmed to be so, then I will take the appropriate measures.”

Our meeting that night then disbanded, and later on a group of people testified to the chief judge that the response was indeed in the handwriting of Ibn Taymiyya. And so the matter was confirmed, and the chief judge himself testified to this effect in Sha‘bān 705 AH (February and March 1306 CE). He then met with the military commanders and informed them of what he found objectionable about the legal opinion. He ordered that Ibn Taymiyya be summoned to appear before the sultan.

So the postal service carried this order to Damascus, but the amir Jamāl al-Dīn Aqqūsh al-Afram (the viceroy in Syria) prevented its delivery. It so happened that his steward, the amir Sayf al-Dīn Altunqush, had arrived in Cairo to address some state business. The sultan had given some of his own properties to Altunqush’s master, the viceroy, and this required some documentation by the chief judge Zayn al-Dīn al-Mālikī. The steward met with me for that reason, and I went to see the chief judge to inform him about Sayf al-Dīn and his relationship to the grand statesman. I also told him about his master’s position, and I begged permission to allow the steward to enter and asked the chief judge to treat him honorably.

He granted me permission, but when the steward entered he treated him disparagingly and spoke harshly to him, saying: “Are you the

steward of Jamāl al-Dīn?" He replied: "Yes." The chief judge said: "May God not cheer him!" He gave the steward a letter to give to his master and said: "Tell him this: You know what you used to be. And you know that I bought you for the sultan al-Mansūr. You were awfully needy when you were a rank-and-filer and then an officer, but God Sublime bestowed His blessings upon you and entrusted you with everything you now have. God attached you to the company of the greatest rulers, and you acquired the epithet King of the Officers. And now you are protecting a man whom I have summoned to fulfill God's claims against him? By God, if you do not send him to me, may He see to your eternal damnation!"

This was the reason for the summoning of Ibn Taymiyya and for Zayn al-Dīn al-Mālikī's incitement against him. I have recorded this based on personal witness. As for the events that took place in Damascus during this period, I have summarized the account of Shams al-Dīn al-Jazarī in his *History*.

THE SULTAN PRESIDES IN THE PALACE OF JUSTICE

On Monday, the 20th of Jum'ādā I in the year 711 AH (October 4, 1311 CE), the sultan attended the Palace of Justice and was joined by the four chief judges. It had been proclaimed in the two capital cities that whosoever had a grievance to report should appear in the Palace of Justice, stating his case and making his complaint. So the people arrived and told their stories before the sultan. The session took place in the hall that the sultan had renovated, where the previous hall had once stood. The sultan maintained this custom of attending the Palace of Justice on every Monday up until the present time, which is in the year 725 AH (1325 CE).

In the following month (November 1311 CE), the sultan removed the chief judge Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Makhlūf al-Mālikī from the judiciary because of a certificate that he had confirmed, and the sultan wanted him to rescind his confirmation. The chief judge refused, so the sultan cast doubt on the probity of the witnesses of the certificate, and still the chief judge refused to rescind, remaining confirmed in his judgment. So the sultan said to him: "I remove you from your position," and the chief judge replied: "God has been merciful to me." He got up and left the legislative session, but did not appoint anyone else in his place. Thereafter, others began to strive longingly for the position, and when this news reached the sultan, he reinstated the chief judge Zayn al-Dīn.

ON THE CADASTRAL SURVEY OF SYRIA

In this year (713 AH / 1313 CE), it was ordered that the land of Syria and the towns, villages, hamlets, districts, and provinces of Damascus and its environs were to be inspected, as well as those of Homs, Baalbek, Gaza, and Safad. Appointed to this task was the judge Mu‘īn al-Dīn ibn Hibat Allāh ibn Hashīsh, the superintendent of the army in Syria. He would receive the results of the inspections and set them down in writing, and appointed alongside him was a group of scribes. He went before the sultan in the month of Ramadān after completing his work in Damascus [along with many other officials and scribes] to establish a register of the cadastral survey and divide up the land grants (*iqṭā‘āt*). They gathered to complete this work in the citadel, in a space reserved for them. When the work was completed, the fiscal year was changed from 712 to 713 (1312–13 CE), and the new land grant assignments were written up. [When the assignments were announced in Damascus], they caused much disagreement and disturbance.

THE ARRIVAL OF ENVOYS FROM POPE JOHN*

In this year (727 AH / 1327 CE) envoys visited the sultan on behalf of the pope, who occupies the position of caliph in the lands of the Franks. There were also envoys from the king of France, whose name was Philip (VI). They had an audience with the sultan and presented the gifts that they had brought. The message of their letter to him was a request that the sultan make clear his decree regarding the Christians of the empire. They mentioned that there were many Muslims in the lands of the Franks, and if the sultan treated the non-Muslims well in his own kingdom, the Franks would accordingly treat the Muslims well. The sultan listened to their letter, accepted their gifts, treated them with kindness, and sent them back to their sovereign.

A DREAM

Here is the account of a dream I had that I’d like to record because it indicates the soundness of my lineage. On the night of Friday, the 13th of Dhū al-Qada, 729 AH (September 8, 1329 CE), I saw the Messenger of God in my sleep, and he was sitting in the northern hall of the Nāsiriyya madrasa, on Bayn al-Qasrayn Street.* He was

speaking fondly of ‘Ā’isha, the Mother of the Believers. So I said to him: “O Messenger of God, she is my aunt!” Then I said again: “O Messenger of God, ‘Ā’isha, the Mother of the Believers, is my aunt, for I am Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Dāim ibn Munajjā ibn ‘Alī ibn Tarrād ibn Khattāb ibn Nasr ibn Ismā’il ibn Ibrāhīm. . . .” And when I came to Ibrāhīm in the account of my lineage, the Prophet said: “The son of Ja’far.” And I replied: “Yes, oh Messenger of God. The son of Ja’far ibn Hilāl ibn al-Husayn ibn Layth ibn Talha ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Siddiq. Therefore, ‘Ā’isha, the Mother of the Believers, oh Messenger of God, is my aunt.” And the Prophet said: “Yes.”

Then I awoke from my slumber, and I was gladdened by this dream, so I recorded it.

Praise be to God.

Appendix

AL-NUWAYRĪ'S TABLE OF CONTENTS

This appendix contains a translation of *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*'s original table of contents. The outline format used below is meant to facilitate consultation. In the original manuscript, the table of contents is presented as a uniform text block without shifting margins or numerical abbreviations. As discussed in the Introduction, al-Nuwayrī's work is composed of five principal books, each of which is divided into five sections that are further differentiated into multiple chapters and subchapters. Detailed though the following table may appear to be, it provides only a glimpse of the complete contents of *The Ultimate Ambition*, because al-Nuwayrī listed the titles of only the three uppermost levels of his book's hierarchy.

1.0 The First Book, on the Heavens and the Meteorological Phenomena and the Earth and the Lowermost Localities

- 1.1. On the heavens and what they contain
 - 1.1.1. On the creation of the heavens
 - 1.1.2. On the structure of the heavens
 - 1.1.3. On the angels
 - 1.1.4. On the seven planets
 - 1.1.5. On the fixed stars
- 1.2. On the meteorological phenomena
 - 1.2.1. On clouds and the reason for their occurrence, and on snow and hail
 - 1.2.2. On shooting stars, thunderbolts, thunder, and lightning
 - 1.2.3. On the element of wind
 - 1.2.4. On the element of fire, and its names
- 1.3. On the nights, days, months, years, natural seasons, festivals, and holidays
 - 1.3.1. On the nights and days
 - 1.3.2. On the months and years
 - 1.3.3. On the natural seasons
 - 1.3.4. On the festivals and holidays
- 1.4. On the earth, mountains, seas, islands, rivers, and springs
 - 1.4.1. On the creation of the earth
 - 1.4.2. On the classification of the names of the earth
 - 1.4.3. On the size of the earth and its area
 - 1.4.4. On the seven climes

- 1.4.5. On the mountains
- 1.4.6. On the seas and the islands
- 1.4.7. On the rivers, streams, and springs
- 1.5. On the physical qualities of the geographic localities, and the dispositions of their inhabitants, their attributes, ancient buildings, fortresses, palaces, and dwellings
 - 1.5.1. On the physical qualities of the geographic localities and the dispositions of their inhabitants
 - 1.5.2. On the attributes of the territories
 - 1.5.3. On ancient buildings
 - 1.5.4. On descriptions of fortresses
 - 1.5.5. On descriptions of palaces and dwellings

2.0 The Second Book, on the Human Being and That Which Relates to Him

- 2.1. On the etymology of the word “human” (*insān*), and on the life stages and natures of the human being; and on the description and similes of his body parts; and on love poetry, erotic preludes, love, passion, desire; and genealogy
 - 2.1.1. On the etymology, naming, life stages, and nature of the human being
 - 2.1.2. On the descriptions and similes of the human being’s body parts. And among what is described is: sweetness of breath; good speech and voice quality; erectness of posture; and the manner in which women walk.
 - 2.1.3. On amorous and erotic poetry, desire, love, and passion
 - 2.1.4. On genealogy
- 2.2. On the famous stories about the Prophet and the Companions; the well-known proverbs of the pre-Islamic Arabs and their superstitious practices; the stories of the soothsayers, omens and ornithomancy, physiognomy, induction, euphemisms and metonymies, allusion, enigmas, and riddles
 - 2.2.1. On stories and proverbs
 - 2.2.2. On the superstitious practices of the pre-Islamic Arabs
 - 2.2.3. On the stories of the soothsayers, omens and ornithomancy, physiognomy, and induction
 - 2.2.4. On euphemisms, metonymies, and allusions
 - 2.2.5. On enigmas and riddles
- 2.3. On praise, invective, entertaining anecdotes, jests, wine, drinking together, drinking companions, female singing slaves, and the description of musical instruments
 - 2.3.1. On praise, comprising thirteen divisions*
 - 2.3.1.1. On the truth about praise
 - 2.3.1.2. On what has been said about munificence and generosity and stories of generous people
 - 2.3.1.3. On what has been said about giving before being asked
 - 2.3.1.4. On what has been said about bravery, forbearance, and daring
 - 2.3.1.5. On what has been said about possessing an abundance of reason
 - 2.3.1.6. On what has been said about honesty
 - 2.3.1.7. On what has been said about fidelity
 - 2.3.1.8. On what has been said about humbleness
 - 2.3.1.9. On what has been said about contentment with little and purity
 - 2.3.1.10. On what has been said about thanks and praise
 - 2.3.1.11. On what has been said about the oath and its fulfillment
 - 2.3.1.12. On what has been said about intercession
 - 2.3.1.13. On what has been said about apology and entreaty
 - 2.3.2. On invective, comprising fourteen divisions
 - 2.3.2.1. On what has been said about invective and who deserves it

- 2.3.2.2. On what has been said about envy
- 2.3.2.3. On what has been said about slander and injustice
- 2.3.2.4. On what has been said about calumny and defamation
- 2.3.2.5. On what has been said about avarice and meanness, and stories about misers and their justifications
- 2.3.2.6. On what has been said about coming uninvited to dinner, and connected with this are the stories of the eaters and eating together
- 2.3.2.7. On what has been said about cowardice and flight
- 2.3.2.8. On what has been said about stupidity and ignorance
- 2.3.2.9. On what has been said about lying
- 2.3.2.10. On what has been said about betrayal
- 2.3.2.11. On what has been said about arrogance and pride
- 2.3.2.12. On what has been said about greed
- 2.3.2.13. On what has been said about promising and deferring
- 2.3.2.14. On what has been said about the inability to express oneself clearly
- 2.3.3. On entertaining anecdotes and jests
- 2.3.4. On wine and its prohibition, afflictions, crimes, and names. And on the stories of those who abstained from it before the advent of Islam, and those among the nobles who were punished for consuming it, on those who were famous for drinking wine, and behaved dissolutely in public because of it. And on the good poetry declaimed about it, and the descriptions of its instruments and vessels, and what has been said about pursuing pleasure, and descriptions of the drinking soirées, and other things along these lines.
- 2.3.5. On boon companions and cup-bearers
- 2.3.6. On singing and listening to music, and what has been said about singing by way of censure and permission, and who listened to singing among the Companions, Successors, Imams, the pious worshippers, and ascetics. And on the caliphs who sang and their offspring. And on the nobles and leaders who sang. And on the stories of those singers by whom singing was translated from Persian to Arabic.
- 2.3.7. On what the singer needs, and must know. And on what has been said about singing, and on the descriptions of female singing slaves, and on the descriptions of musical instruments.
- 2.4. On congratulations, glad tidings, elegies, hired female mourners, asceticism, trust in God, and prayers of invocations
 - 2.4.1. On congratulations and glad tidings
 - 2.4.2. On elegies and hired female mourners
 - 2.4.3. On asceticism and trust in God
 - 2.4.4. On prayers of invocation
- 2.5. On the ruler, what is required of him, and what he is in need of. And on that which is incumbent upon his subjects with respect to him, and vice versa. And related to this is the discussion of the advisers and the generals of the armies, and the descriptions of weapons, and the holders of religious positions, and the scribes, and the eloquent ones.
 - 2.5.1. On the conditions of the imamate, both legal and conventional
 - 2.5.2. On the qualities of the ruler, his character, and the ways in which he is superior to others. And a recounting of what has been transmitted of the sayings of the caliphs and the rulers that demonstrate their superior stature and their noble character.
 - 2.5.3. On what is owed to the ruler by the subjects in the way of obedience, faithful counsel, glorification, and reverence
 - 2.5.4. On the commandments of rulers
 - 2.5.5. On what is owed to the subjects by the ruler

- 2.5.6. On good statecraft, and the management of the kingdom. And connected with this are the subjects of judiciousness and determination, seizing the opportunity, self-mastery, forgiveness, punishment, and revenge.
- 2.5.7. On consultation, following opinions, despotism, and on the question of whose opinion should be relied upon, and which rulers did not like asking for counsel
- 2.5.8. On safeguarding secrets, granting audiences, and on chamberlains
- 2.5.9. On the advisers and the ruler's companions
- 2.5.10. On the commanders of the armies, holy war, war stratagems, descriptions of battles, fortresses, and what was said in the description of weapons
- 2.5.11. On judges and governors
- 2.5.12. On the Court of Grievances this being a branch of the House of Justice
- 2.5.13. On supervision of moral behavior
- 2.5.14. On the scribes and the eloquent ones; on secretaryship and its different branches of duties and writings, namely the chancery, administrative and financial secretaryship, legal secretaryship, the copying of manuscripts, and writing pedagogy

3.0 The Third Book, on the Mute Beasts

- 3.1. On the carnivorous animals and those species related to them
 - 3.1.1. On the lion, tiger, and panther
 - 3.1.2. On the cheetah, dog, wolf, hyena, and Egyptian mongoose
 - 3.1.3. On the gray squirrel, fox, bear, cat, and pig
- 3.2. On the wild beasts, antelopes, and those species related to them
 - 3.2.1. On what has been said about the elephant, the rhinoceros, the giraffe, oryx, and deer
 - 3.2.2. On what has been said about wild asses, mountain goat, and Saharan oryx
 - 3.2.3. On what has been said about the antelope, the hare, the monkey, and the ostrich
- 3.3. On livestock
 - 3.3.1. On the horse
 - 3.3.2. On mules and hinnies and donkeys
 - 3.3.3. On camels, cattle, sheep, and goats
- 3.4. On venomous creatures
 - 3.4.1. On deadly venomous creatures
 - 3.4.2. On non-deadly venomous creatures
- 3.5. On birds and fish, containing an additional chapter on what has been said about hunting implements for land and sea
 - 3.5.1. On carnivorous raptors, and they are: eagles, goshawks, saker falcons, and peregrine falcons
 - 3.5.2. On the scavenger birds, and they are: the vulture, the Egyptian vulture, the kite, and the crow
 - 3.5.3. On the herbivorous birds, and they are: the francolin, the bustard, the peacock, the cock, the hen, goose, duck, flamingo, kingfisher, the swallow, jay, the starling, the quail, the hoopoe, magpie, and sparrows
 - 3.5.4. On the common birds, and they are: the turtledove, the palm dove, the ringdove, collared doves, sandgrouse, the stock dove and its kinds, and the parrot
 - 3.5.5. On the nocturnal birds, and they are: the bat, the (mythical bird) Karawān, the owl, screech owl
 - 3.5.6. On the winged insects, and they are: ants, the hornet, the spider, locusts, silkworms, the fly, gnats, mosquitoes

- 3.5.7. On the kinds of fish, including the dophin, electric ray, crocodile, skink, tortoise, turtle, hippopotamus, sable, beaver, ermine, frogs, crab, and some marvels of the sea
- 3.5.8. On the descriptions of implements of hunting on land and at sea, and the description of crossbows

4.0 The Fourth Book, on Plants on Different Kinds of Scents, Perfumery, Galia Moscata, Perfumes Made of Aloe with Various Admixtures, Distillates, and Other Things

- 4.1. On the origin of plants, and what different soils are suited to producing. And related to this is the discussion of vegetables and foodstuffs.
 - 4.1.1. On the origin of plants, and their classification
 - 4.1.2. On what different kinds of soil are suited to producing, and on what uproots a plant root
 - 4.1.3. On foodstuffs and vegetables
- 4.2. On trees
 - 4.2.1. On those whose fruit has an inedible peel
 - 4.2.2. On those whose fruit has an inedible stone
 - 4.2.3. On those whose fruit has neither peel nor stone
- 4.3. On aromatic flowers
 - 4.3.1. On aromatics that can be distilled. And these include four kinds: the rose, the wild rose, the white willow, and the water lily.
 - 4.3.2. On aromatics that cannot be distilled. And these include violets, narcissus, jasmine, myrtle, saffron, mint.
- 4.4. On gardens and flowers. And connected with this are the gum resins, mannas, and saps (including such things as wax, honey, sugar, wormwood, etc.).
 - 4.4.1. On gardens, and how they have been described in poetry and prose
 - 4.4.2. On flowers, and how they have been described
 - 4.4.3. On gum resins, containing twenty-eight types
 - 4.4.4. On mannas and secretions
- 4.5. On the forms of aromatics, perfumery, Galia Moscata, perfumes made of aloe with various admixtures, distillates, oils, certain perfumes, sexual medicines, and the sympathetic properties
 - 4.5.1. On musk and its varieties
 - 4.5.2. On ambergris, its varieties, and its sources
 - 4.5.3. On wood, its types and sources
 - 4.5.4. On sandalwood, its types and sources
 - 4.5.5. On spikenard and its types; and on the clove, and its essence
 - 4.5.6. On costus and its types
 - 4.5.7. On the production of Galia Moscata and aloe-based admixtures
 - 4.5.8. On the production of *rāmik* and *sukk*
 - 4.5.9. On the production of certain perfumes, and on distilled water and undistilled
 - 4.5.10. On the medicines that promote sex and make it pleasurable, and what is related to that
 - 4.5.11. On what is to be done with sympathetic qualities

5.0 The Fifth Book, on History

- 5.1. On the creation of Adam and Eve, their story, and those who came after Adam up until the end of the story of the People of the Ditch
 - 5.1.1. On the creation of Adam and Eve, and what is known of their story until the time of their death
 - 5.1.2. On Seth, the son of Adam, and his children

- 5.1.3. On Idris the prophet
- 5.1.4. On the story of Noah and the flood
- 5.1.5. On the story of Hūd and the nation of Ād, and their destruction by a furious wind
- 5.1.6. On the story of Sālih and the nation of Thamūd, who hobbled the She-Camel, and their destruction
- 5.1.7. On the People of the Abandoned Well and the Lofty Palace, and their destruction
- 5.1.8. On the People of the Ditch and their story
- 5.2. On Abraham, the Friend of God; and on the story of Abraham and Nimrod; and on the stories of Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Dhū l-Kifl, and Shu‘ayb
 - 5.2.1. On Abraham the Friend of God, and the story of Nimrod, son of Canaan
 - 5.2.2. On the story of Lot and his people, and how God turned their cities upside down
 - 5.2.3. On the story of Isaac and Jacob
 - 5.2.4. On the story of Joseph, son of Jacob
 - 5.2.5. On Job, his afflictions, and God’s mercy upon him
 - 5.2.6. On Dhū l-Kifl, son of Job
 - 5.2.7. On Shuayb and the people of Madyan
- 5.3. On Moses, son of Imrān, and the story of Moses and Pharaoh; and on Joshua and those who followed him; and on Ezekiel, Elijah, Elisha, Eli, Samuel, Saul, Goliath, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Nebuchadnezzar; and on the destruction of Jerusalem and its rebuilding and the story of ‘Uzayr; and on the story of Jonah, son of Matthew, and on Bulūqiyā, Zachariah, John (the Baptist), ‘Imrān, Mary, Jesus, and the stories of the disciples, and how they were received by those to whom they were sent, and on the story of the prophet George (Jirjis). This section contains six chapters, and I have added an appendix of four chapters in which I recount what has been said about the events that will precede Jesus’s descent to earth, the period he will spend here, his death, what will follow him, and something on the Day of Resurrection.
 - 5.3.1. On the story of Moses, son of Imrān; and on Aaron, the drowning of Pharaoh, the Israelites, Korah, Balaam, the Giants, and others
 - 5.3.2. On those who followed Moses, such as Joshua, Ezekiel, Elijah, Elisha, Eli, Samuel, Saul, Goliath, David, and Solomon
 - 5.3.3. On the stories of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar, the destruction of Jerusalem and its restoration, and the story of ‘Uzayr that relates to that
 - 5.3.4. On the story of Jonah, and on Bulūqiyā
 - 5.3.5. On Zachariah, John, Imrān, his daughter Mary, and Jesus the son of Mary
 - 5.3.6. On the disciples whom Jesus sent forth, and on what became of them after he was raised up to heaven; and on the story of George
 - 5.3.7. An account of the signs that will appear before the descent of Jesus, son of Mary
 - 5.3.8. On the descent of Jesus to earth, and his killing of the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl), the emergence of the tribes of Gog and Magog, and their destruction; and the death of Jesus
 - 5.3.9. On what will take place after the death of Jesus, son of Mary, up until the first sounding of the trumpet
 - 5.3.10. On the stories of the Day of Resurrection, and on the second sounding of the trumpet
- 5.4. On the kings of ancient countries (*asqā’*), nations (*umam*), and territorial divisions (*tawā’if*), and on the dam flood, and the battles of the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance

- 5.4.1. On Alexander the Great, who is recounted in the Quran, Sūrat al-Kahf
- 5.4.2. On the kings of (ancient) countries, including Egypt, India, China, and Gibraltar
- 5.4.3. On the kings of the ancient Persian nations, including the first kings of the Persians and their principalities, the Sasanians, the Ancient Greeks, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Slavs, the Lombards, the Franks, the Galicians, and the tribes of the Sudan
- 5.4.4. On the history of the Arab kings; and connected to this is the story of the dam flood
- 5.4.5. On the battle days of the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance
- 5.5. On the history of the Islamic community, comprising an account of the biography of our Prophet Muhammad; the history of the caliphs who followed him; the history of the Umayyad State, the Abbasid State, and the Alids; the states of Muslim rulers and the conquests that God Almighty bestowed upon them, as we shall recount
 - 5.5.1. On the biography of our master, the Messenger of God
 - 5.5.2. On the stories of the caliphs after him: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī, as well as ‘Alī’s son al-Hasan
 - 5.5.3. On the history of the Umayyad State in Syria and beyond
 - 5.5.4. On the history of the Abbasid State in Iraq and Egypt
 - 5.5.5. On the history of the Umayyad State in al-Andalus, and on al-Andalus after the fall of the Umayyads
 - 5.5.6. On the history of Ifrīqiya and the Maghrib, and those who ruled them as vassals and those who achieved independence in their rule
 - 5.5.7. On the descendants of Abū Tālib who sought out the caliphate during the time of the Umayyad and Abbasid states and were killed, following the assassination of al-Husayn ibn ‘Alī
 - 5.5.8. On the histories of the Zanj, the Qarāmita, and the Khawārij in Mosul
 - 5.5.9. On those who became independent in the eastern and northern lands during the Abbasid period, namely the kings of Khorasan, Transoxania, al-Jibāl, Tabaristān, Ghazna, al-Ghawr, Sindh, India. These include the states of the Samanids, the Saffarids, the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids, and the Daylamids.
 - 5.5.10. On the history of the rulers of Iraq, Mosul, the Jazīra, Diyarbakr, Syria, and the region of Aleppo; these include the Hamdanid State, the Buyids, the Saljuqs, and the Atabegs
 - 5.5.11. On the Khwārizmid State; and the state of Genghis Khan, that being the Tatars; and those that split off from it
 - 5.5.12. On the history of the kings of Egypt, who ruled during the time of the Abbasid State, in place of its caliphs; this includes the history of the Fatimids, who traced their lineage to ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, and the territories they ruled in the Maghrib and how they came to conquer Egypt, Syria, Aleppo, the fortresses, the coastline, and other places until their state perished; and on the rise of the Ayyūbid State and the history of its kings in Egypt and Syria, until it perished; and the rise of the Mamluk State (*dawlat al-Turk*), and those who ruled it, and those who were brought as slaves from other climes, and the kingdoms they conquered, and other aspects of their history, up until the time of our composition of this work, in the year [. . .] and seven hundred,* during the reign of our master the sultan, the most glorious leader, the Victorious Ruler, Protector of the World and the Faith, Sultan of Islam and the Muslims, Abī al-Fath Muhammad, son of the martyred Sultan al-Mansūr Qalāwūn, Sword of the World and the Faith, may God perpetuate his reign and water his father’s legacy with the

rainclouds of His mercy and pleasure, and with the blessing of [the Prophet Muhammad] the master of the children of Adnān!

Register of Proper Names

Abd Allāh ibn Tāhir (d. 844 CE). Celebrated general and governor of Khorasan under the Abbasids. Known for his political acumen and wise rule, he served several caliphs and was a great patron of poetry as well as a poet and musician in his own right.

Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb (d. 693 CE). The son of ‘Umar, the second Rightly Guided caliph, and an exemplary figure of the early Muslim community. A significant contributor of traditions from the Prophet Muhammad, Ibn ‘Umar was himself offered the caliphate on three occasions and declined each time.

Abū Bakr al-S.iddīq (d. 634 CE). The first caliph. Abū Bakr was a close friend of the Prophet Muhammad and the father of ‘Ā’isha, the Prophet’s wife. Al-Nuwayrī traces his lineage back to Abū Bakr on more than one occasion in *The Ultimate Ambition*.

Abū Hanīfa, al-Nu‘mān ibn Thābit (d. 767 CE). The eponymous founder of the Hanafī school, one of the four main Sunni schools of Islamic law (alongside the Shāfi‘ī, Mālikī, and Hanb‘Alī rites).

Abū Hanīfa al-Dīnawārī, Ahmad ibn Dāwūd (fl. late 9th c. CE). A polymath and author of works on Arabic philology, Hellenistic philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and history.

Abū Ishāq al-Sabī (d. 994 CE). A member of an important Sabian family of secretaries and scholars from Harrān who settled in Baghdad. Abū Ishāq served different Buyid amirs and was well known for his epistles and poetry.

Abū Muslim, al-Khurāsānī (d. 755 CE). The leader of the Abbasid revolution in Khorasan whose political propagandizing and military prowess were instrumental in bringing about the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty.

Abū Nuwās, al-Hasan ibn Hānī’ (d. ca. 813–15 CE). One of the most famous poets of the classical Arabic literary tradition, and a paragon of the school of modern (*muhdath*) poetry that emerged in the Abbasid period. Known for his wine poetry, stinging satires, and homoerotic verse, he is one of the most frequently cited poets in al-Nuwayrī’s work.

Abū Tammām, Habīb ibn Aws (d. 845 CE). Along with Abū Nuwās and al-Mutanabbī, one of the most famous and influential poets of the Abbasid period. He is regarded as the main representative of the so-called artificial (*masnū’*) style that greatly prized various rhetorical conceits in Arabic verse, and his poetry was anthologized and commented upon for centuries after his death.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855 CE). The eponym of the Hanb‘Alī school, one of the four main Sunni schools of Islamic law, and a major jurist, traditionist, and theologian. His most famous disciple in the early fourteenth century, Ibn Taymiyya, makes

frequent appearances in al-Nuwayrī's encyclopedia.

‘Ā’isha bint Abī Bakr (d. 678 CE). The third and favorite wife of the Prophet Muhammad and the daughter of the first caliph, Abū Bakr. ‘Ā’isha played a leading role in the politics of caliphal succession following the Prophet's death. Al-Nuwayrī refers to her fondly as his aunt in the account of his lineage from Abū Bakr.

Alī ibn Abī Tālib (d. 661 CE). The fourth caliph and the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. The Shī‘a regard ‘Alī and his descendants to be the rightful successors of the Prophet.

Avicenna, al-Husayn ibn ‘Abd Allāh (d. 1037 CE), known in the Islamic world as Ibn Sīnā. One of the greatest philosophers, physicians, and scientists of the medieval world, Avicenna's many works were studied for centuries after his death. He is one of the most commonly quoted sources in al-Nuwayrī's work.

Dioscorides (d. ca. 90 CE). A Greek botanist and pharmacologist. His pharmacopoeia, *De Materia Medica*, was translated into Arabic and circulated widely in the Islamic world.

Ghazan, Mahmūd (d. 1304 CE). A Mongol ruler of the Persian Ilkhanate, ruling from 1295 until his death. He converted to Islam from Buddhism during his reign and was known to be multilingual and a patron of the arts and sciences; his famous minister, Rashīd al-Dīn, compiled a history of the Mongols under his stewardship. Ghazan invaded Mamluk Syria on two occasions, which al-Nuwayrī documents in his work.

al-Hallīmī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Husayn ibn al-Hasan (d. 1012 CE). A jurist, traditionist, and theologian of Transoxania.

Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abd Allāh (d. 686-88 CE). A great scholar of the first generation of Muslims. His opinions on Quranic interpretation, pre-Islamic poetry, the Prophet Muhammad's customary practice, and other topics were recognized as highly authoritative by the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Ibn al-Baytār, Abū Muhammad ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ahmad al-Dīn al-Mālaqī (d. 1248 CE). A famous botanist and pharmacologist, born in Malaga. He traveled across North Africa and settled in Egypt where he was appointed chief herbalist by the Ayyūbid sultan al-Kāmil. Ibn al-Baytār authored several scientific works, including a commentary on Dioscorides.

Ibn al-Mutazz, ‘Abd Allāh (d. 908 CE). An important Abbasid prince, poet, critic, and, famously, “caliph for a day.” He authored the *Kitāb al-bad‘ī*, a seminal work of literary criticism that analyzed the formal features of modern (*muhdath*) poetry.

Ibn al-Rūmī, ‘Alī ibn al-‘Abbās (d. 896 CE). One of the great poets of Baghdad, he was of Greek and Persian extraction and known for composing prolifically in a wide range of poetic genres.

Ibn Taymiyya, Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad (d. 1328 CE). One of the most famous medieval Islamic theologians and jurists, whose legacy in modern times significantly outstrips his premodern influence. A contemporary of al-Nuwayrī's, Ibn Taymiyya was imprisoned by the Mamluk authorities on multiple occasions for his theological

opinions and died in captivity.

Ibn Wahshiyya, Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn ‘Alī (fl. 930 CE). The obscure author or transmitter of several works on magic, agriculture, astronomy, and the pagan practices of the ancient inhabitants of Iraq. His most famous work, *The Nabataean Agriculture*, has been the subject of scholarly scrutiny and debate since the mid-nineteenth century.

al-Jāhiz, Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr ibn Bahr (d. 868–89 CE). One of the most important prose stylists and polymathic writers in all of classical Arabic literature. Al-Jāhiz’s oeuvre helped establish, in many ways, the defining features of *adab* literature and especially its encyclopedic aspect. He is one of the most frequently cited authorities in al-Nuwayrī’s work, particularly his *Book of Animals* (*Kitāb al-Hayawān*).

Mālik ibn Anas (d. 796 CE). The eponym of the Mālikī school, one of the four main Sunni schools of Islamic law (alongside the Shāfi‘ī, Hanafī, and Hanb‘Alī rites). Al-Nuwayrī’s father belonged to the Mālikī school, and one of his chief allies and patrons, Zayn al-Dīn Ibn Makhlūf, was the Mālikī chief judge in Cairo.

al-Mamūn, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Hārūn (d. 833 CE). Abbasid caliph who reigned in Baghdad from 813–33, a period of great political tumult and cultural vibrancy. He established the House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikma*), a center for intellectual exchange and translation, and is proverbial in Arabic literature for his role as a patron of the arts and sciences.

al-Mans.ūr Qalāwūn (d. 1290 CE). The fifth Mamluk sultan, who reigned from 1279–90. Known for his diplomatic acumen and victories on the battlefield, Qalāwūn also presided over one of the greatest building sprees of the Mamluk period. His direct descendants and mamluks would control the sultanate for nearly a century after his death.

al-Masūdī, Abū l-Hasan ‘Alī ibn al-Husayn (d. 956 CE). Geographer, historian, litterateur, and polymathic author of the encyclopedic *Fields of Gold* (*Murūj al-dhahab*), an important source for al-Nuwayrī.

al-Māwardī, ‘Alī ibn Muhammad (d. 1058 CE). Jurist and author of the *Ordinances of Governance* (*Kitāb al-ahkām al-sultāniyya*), a landmark work of political theory, which al-Nuwayrī abridges extensively in his discussion of the caliphate.

Muhammad (d. 632 CE). The Prophet of Islam, universally considered by Muslims to be the “seal” of the Abrahamic prophets and the Messenger of God, to whom was revealed the holy Quran.

al-Mutanabbī, Abū al-Tayyib Ahmad ibn al-Husayn (d. 965 CE). One of the most revered poets of the classical Arabic tradition, al-Mutanabbī was born in Kufa in the early tenth century and spent his career as a traveling poet, offering his talents as a panegyrist to various patrons in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. His poetry is among the most widely anthologized in the Arabic canon and is amply represented in al-Nuwayrī’s work.

al-Nāsir, Muhammad ibn Qalāwūn (d. 1341 CE). Mamluk sultan and son of al-Mansūr Qalāwūn. Al-Nāsir reigned for three periods (1293–94, 1299–1309, 1310–41), holding power during one of the most stable and prosperous periods of Mamluk

rule. Al-Nuwayrī was one of al-Nāsir's close confidants.

Ptolemy, Claudius (d. ca. 170 CE). An Egyptian geographer, mathematician, and astronomer of Greek descent who lived in Alexandria. Ptolemy's scientific treatises were translated into Arabic and were greatly influential in the history of Islamic and European science. His astronomical treatise, the *Almagest*, provided the basic model of the universe for nearly a millennium and a half.

al-Shāfi'ī, Muhammad ibn Idrīs (d. 820 CE). Eponym of the Shāfi'ī school, one of the four main Sunni schools of Islamic law. Al-Nuwayrī belonged to the Shāfi'ī rite.

al-Tamīmī, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Maqdisī (d. ca. 980 CE). A physician born in Jerusalem who settled in Egypt. Al-Nuwayrī quotes from his work *al-Murshid* (*The Guide*) and abridges several chapters of another work entitled *Jayb* (or *Tib*) *al-arūs wa-rayhān al-nufūs* (*The Bride's Collar [or Perfume] and the Sweet Scent of Souls*) in the final section of book 4, *On Plants*.

al-Tha'libī, Abū Mansūr (d. 1039 CE). An anthologist, lexicographer, and philologist from Nishapur who authored dozens of works of literary scholarship. al-Tha'libī's great anthology, *The Unique Pearl of the Age* (*Yatimat al-Dahr*), is a major source for the history of Arabic poetry, and his *Science of Lexicography* (*Fiqh al-lughā*) is a frequently cited source in al-Nuwayrī's encyclopedia.

ʿUmar ibn al-Khattāb (d. 644 CE). The second caliph. During his reign (634–44 CE), the Muslim state witnessed a dramatic military expansion into Persia, the Levant, Egypt, eastern Anatolia, and parts of North Africa.

ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (d. 656 CE). The third caliph. His reign (644–56 CE) saw further expansion of the Muslim armies, as well as revolts against the caliphate. ʿUthmān's assassination took place in a context of turbulent and divisive factionalism, culminating in civil war.

Wahb ibn Munabbih (fl. 700 CE). An important early traditionist from Yemen, known especially for transmitting narratives about the biblical prophets.

al-Watwāt, Jamāl al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm (d. 1318 CE). An Egyptian manuscript copyist known for his wide-ranging knowledge of books. His work *Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts* (*Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar*) is a four-volume encyclopedic compendium that was one of al-Nuwayrī's most important sources and models for *The Ultimate Ambition*.

al-Zamakhsharī, Jār Allāh Mahmūd ibn ʿUmar (d. 1144 CE). A major exegete, grammarian, philologist, and litterateur, regarded as one of the last important representatives of the Muʿtazilite theological school. His Quran commentary, *The Revealer* (*al-Kashshāf*), is one of the most widely copied and studied works of Islamic exegesis.

Page References to the Arabic Edition

The following references correspond to the Cairo edition of al-Nuwayrī's work. In cases where I have drawn several disconnected passages from large chapters, I have supplied the number of the first page of the relevant section. Thanks to al-Nuwayrī's fastidiousness and the quality of the edition, Arabic readers should be able to locate the relevant passages without difficulty.

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*I have translated the word *adab* in the title of al-Nuwayrī's work as "erudition," so as to mimic the rhyme found in the Arabic while also gesturing toward this especially broad notion of encyclopedic learning.

*For a discussion of the concept of *adab* and its centrality to al-Nuwayrī's work, see the editor's introduction, (p. xvi). See also S.A. Bonebakker, "Early Arabic Literature and the Term *Adab*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984): 389–421.

*In the prefaces to each of the five books of *The Ultimate Ambition*, al-Nuwayrī frequently uses a register of rhymed prose common in Mamluk literature. This accounts for the occasionally incongruous quality of the metaphors that he deploys, which connect more successfully in the Arabic because they are, in essence, rhyming couplets in prose form.

*In the original manuscript, al-Nuwayrī here lays out the table of contents for the encyclopedia, which may be found in its entirety in the appendix (see p. 283).

*The pre-Islamic Arabs used the term *al-kaff al-khadīb* (the stained hand) to refer to the five stars of the constellation Cassiopeia.

The image of the sun setting in a muddy spring ('ayn hami'a*) is found in the Quran (18:86) in connection with the story of Dhū l-Qarnayn (the Two-Horned One), a figure often associated with Alexander the Great.

*In classical Arabic, the term *dura'* is connected with animal coloring. According to Lane, the word refers to “a horse, and to a sheep or goat, having a black head, the rest being white . . . or having a white head and neck, the rest being black.” When used to refer to the three nights of the month following the appearance of the full moon, the term means “a night of which the moon rises at the dawn, or at the commencement of the dawn; the rest thereof being black and dark.” See Lane, 3:872.

*According to Lane, the Arabic lexicographical sources explain this term as the moon hastening to become invisible (Lane, 3:839).

*On alternative readings of the name of this sect, including al-Jandrikaniyya, see Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shahrastānī on the Indian Religions* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 51.

*The word “planet” is derived from Ancient Greek (πλανήτης), meaning “wanderer.” Arabic-Islamic planetary theory is based principally on Ptolemy’s *Almagest*, and the Arabic term for the planets—*al-kawākib al-mutahayyira* (“the confused, or stray, stars”)—refers to the tendency of the planets to deviate from their general path.

*The meteorological phenomena (*al-āthār al-‘ulwiyya*) referred to by al-Nuwayrī correspond to the Aristotelian notion of meteorology, which includes more than the study of weather. Aristotle’s *Meteorology* explores what we would call the earth sciences, including the study of the hydrologic cycle, earthquakes, and all manner of atmospheric phenomena.

* There is quite a bit of confusion about the names for the pre-Islamic seasons. Different tribes and regions used the same terms to refer to different times of the year. For example, the *wasmi* rains were tied to the spring in Yemen and North Africa, while they were associated with the autumn in Syria and the Arabian Peninsula. See Daniel Martin Varisco, "The Rain Periods in Pre-Islamic Arabia," *Arabica* 34, no. 2 (July 1987): 251–66.

*Al-Nuwayrī is referring to Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Watwāt (d. 1318); see Register of Proper Names.

*According to T. Fahd, the term for the rainbow (*qaws quzah*) “is the Arabic variation of the name of a divinity whose importance is attested by a number of theophoric names found among the peoples moving round the region between Central Arabia and the Jordan” from the eighth century BC until the coming of Islam. See *EL2*, s.v., “Kaws Kuzah.”

*The complete Quran verse from which these words are taken is as follows: “And to Solomon We subjected the wind; its morning course was a month’s journey, and its evening course was a month’s journey. And We made the Fount of Molten Brass to flow for him. And of the jinn, some worked before him by the leave of his Lord; and such of them as swerved away from Our commandment, We would let them taste the chastisement of the Blaze.” (Q 34:12) The wind mentioned in the verse is said to be the one referred to as the Wind of Longing.

*The tribe of Ād is an ancient tribe of Arabia, described in the Quran as a powerful and haughty people who rejected the prophet Hūd when he was sent to them by God. Their punishment came in the form of a terrible wind: “Then, when they saw it as a sudden cloud coming towards their valleys, they said, ‘This is a cloud, that shall give us rain!’ Not so; rather it is that you sought to hasten—a wind, wherein is a painful chastisement, destroying everything by the commandment of its Lord. So in the morning there was naught to be seen but their dwelling-places. Even so do We recompense the people of the sinners.” (Q 46:24–25).

*The *jathjāth* flower is *Pulicaria undulata*, which has no vernacular translation in English.

*The Arabic term *markh* means *Cynanchum viminalis*, or “caustic bush,” a tree used for striking fire.

*Abū Qubays is a sacred hill in Mecca, near the Great Mosque. It is said to be the burial ground of Adam and other important figures of Islamic tradition, as well as the first mountain created by God.

*Al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī (fl. 580 CE) was one of the greatest pre-Islamic poets and the author of an ode counted among the finest specimens of ancient Arabic poetry (*al-Muallaqāt*).

*The *arfaj* plant is the *Rhanterium epapposum*, which has no term in vernacular English. It is a “fast-flowering rosaceous plant” found in the Arabian Peninsula. See *EI2*, s.v. “Nār.”

*This is also called the fire of alfalfa, which catches and subsides quickly.

*The Bedouin names for the night hours differ in the sources and are arranged in various orders. I have assigned translations to the words meant to approximate some aspect of their etymology as well as the progression and recession of darkness, recognizing that in the course of doing so I might have violated a principle of responsible philology.

*The term used here is *wudu'*, the minor ablution, sometimes required after sleep for ritual purity.

*In the original text, the bull lies upon something called a *kumkum*, which, as Wadie Jwaideh explains, is “an obscure word whose meaning it has not been possible to ascertain.” According to Jwaideh, Ibn al-Wardī gives the word as *kathīb* (sand dune) instead. See Wadie Jwaideh, *The Introductory Chapters of Yāqūt’s Muḥam al-Buldān* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), p. 34, fn. 3.

*As in the European Middle Ages: *mare tenobrosum*. Note that the term for island in Arabic (*jazīra*) also means peninsula.

*The geographical position and name of this island or peninsula suggests that it must be al-Silā (Korea or Japan). However, the story about the supporters of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (the Prophet Muhammad’s son-in-law and the fourth caliph) fleeing from the Umayyads is connected with Sri Lanka (Ceylon, sometimes known as *al-Silān*). See *EI2*, s.v. “Ceylon” for this particular story as well as *EI2*, s.v. “Sīn” for other stories about Muslims going to al-Silā.

*The term *al-ard al-kabira* (“the great land”) is generally construed to mean the land north of the Pyrenees.

*The obscure name given by al-Nuwayrī, *jazīrat barfāgha*, may be an error in the manuscript copy or the printed edition. A more likely reading is *jazīrat rifāa*, which is mentioned by the Syrian geographer Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Dimashqī (d. 1327 CE) in his encyclopedic work, *The Elect of the Age Regarding the Wonders of Land and Sea* (*Kitāb Nukhbat al-dahr fī ajāib al-barr wa-l-bahr*). It refers to an island in the Northern Sea, mentioned alongside the island of Tūliya (Thule, i.e., the Shetlands or Norway). See Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn Abī Tālib Dimashqī, *Cosmographie de Chems-ed-Din Abou ‘Abdallah Mohammed ed-Dimichqui* (Saint Petersburg, 1866), xxxv.

*Al-Nuwayrī is presumably referring to some kind of grain produce that is dried to preserve it from spoilage.

*For a discussion of these two islands, which were said to lie in the Baltic, see Harry T. Norris, *Islam in the Baltic: Europe's Early Muslim Community* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009), 9.

*Bakka is an ancient name for Mecca.

*In the Quran's account of the birth of Jesus, Mary felt her labor begin as she stood by a palm tree: "And the birth pangs surprised her by the trunk of the palm tree. She said, 'Would I had died before this, and become a thing forgotten!' But the one that was below her called to her, 'Nay, do not sorrow; see, your Lord has placed a stream at your feet. And shake the trunk of the palm tree toward yourself: It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon you.'" (Q 19: 23–25)

*Following the conquest of Egypt by the Muslim armies in the seventh century CE, the Muqattam hills on the southeast border of the city of al-Fustāt became the site of a famous cemetery.

*The Arabic word *sāhib* can mean “master” or “owner,” as well as “author” of a certain text. It is not clear in every instance whether al-Nuwayrī is referring to different figures as the masters of certain sciences or the authors of specific books. In Plato’s case, selections of specific works are known to have circulated several centuries before al-Nuwayrī’s time. I owe this suggestion to Alexander Key.

*This is the text that came to be known as the *Centiloquium* in Latin. It was attributed to Ptolemy by the mathematician Ahmad ibn Yūsuf al-Misrī (d. 912 CE and known in the West as Hametus), who wrote a commentary on it.

*This is *Albizzia lebbeck*. See Paulina B. Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 267.

*Tobi was the month when the Nile's waters were thought to be clearest and most pure, when cisterns should be filled and water wheels repaired.

*Note that these are the Coptic names of the months, not the Arabic ones given by al-Nuwayrī.

*In Arab folklore, the Nabateans were proverbial for their agricultural practices and their talent at discovering subterranean sources of water. This is connected with the Arabic root *NBT*, which generates various meanings associated with extracting resources from the land. See *EI2*, s.v. “Nabat.”

*Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn al-Sarī al-Zajjāj (d. 923 CE) was a grammarian from Baghdad, the author of an important study of the Quran, and a teacher of several important tenth-century grammarians (such as al-Fārisī, al-Rummānī, and al-Zajjāji).

*See Dozy, vol. 1, p. 296.

*Al-Nuwayrī may be referring to the Persian inhabitants of Gilān, or their ancient predecessors, the Gelae.

*The word for “fickleness” (*taqallub*) is derived from the same root as “heart” (*qalb*).

*Abū ‘Amr al-Shaybānī (d. ca. 825) was a renowned transmitter of ancient Arabic poetry, a lexicographer, and philologist of the Kufan school of Arabic grammar. The verse in question contains the verb form *ānastu* (“I perceived”), which al-Shaybānī connects with the word *insān* (“human being”).

*As discussed in book 1, the Arabs counted the sun and moon as part of the seven planets. See p. 9.

*An account of the Prophet Muhammad's words or deeds is known as a *ḥadīth*. During the first several centuries of the Islamic era, these accounts were gathered and compiled into authoritative collections along with their chains of transmission. The vast *ḥadīth* corpus was used as a basis for law and ritual practice alongside the Quran, the consensus of respected scholars (*ijmā'*), and independent judicial reasoning (*ijtihād*). In this translation, I refer to *ḥadīths* as traditions of the Prophet.

*The fourth predetermined element (the gender of the child) is missing in this version of the tradition. It appears in other *hadiths*.

*Abd Allāh ibn al-Ahtam was a tax official and military officer in Basra in the late seventh and early eighth century CE.

*There appears to be a corruption in the last line of this poem, as it is found in al-Nuwayrī's text. I have replaced the phrase "*yā zanjīyya zāghu*" with "*bā'z tahtahu zāghu*," which is how the line appears in other anthologies. With the metaphor "Ka'ba of musk," the poet is comparing his beloved's dark skin to the black cloth covering the cubical structure at the center of the Holy Sanctuary in Mecca, around which pilgrims perform their ritual circumambulations. The figure of the falcon and the crow contrasts the whiteness of the poet's own body with the blackness of his beloved's skin. I am grateful to Adam Talib for his helpful reading of this verse.

*The context of this subchapter is taken from Abū Mansūr al-Tha‘ālibī’s lexicographical treatise *The Science of Lexicography* (*Fiqh al-lughā*), which contains long lists of arcane words organized by topic. In the first half of the subchapter, as elsewhere in this book, I have opted not to translate these obscure words so as to maintain their strangeness, since many of al-Nuwayrī’s readers would have been unfamiliar with them. In the second half of this subchapter, however, I render the words into English to approximate how the passage might have sounded to a particularly learned reader.

*The Black Stone (*al-hajar al-aswad*) is a sacred relic built into the eastern corner of the Ka'ba, the cubical structure that lies at the center of the Great Mosque in Mecca. It was said to be placed into its position by the Prophet Muhammad himself. Muslims performing the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca circumambulate the Ka'ba seven times, attempting to kiss the Black Stone as they pass it, in emulation of the Prophet's practice.

*Al-Sarī al-Raffā' (d. ca. 972 CE) was an Iraqi poet famous for his ekphrastic verse.

*Abū Nasr Bishr ibn al-Hārith (d. ca. 840–42), known as al-Hāfi (“the Barefoot”), was a traditionist from Merv famous for his midlife renunciation of the study of Prophetic traditions and his embrace of piety and asceticism. Anecdotes and narratives from his biography (such as the one related by al-Nuwayrī about the slave girl and boy) began circulating in the literary tradition within two centuries after his death, and Bishr was identified as a Sufi saint by later theorists and systematizers of Sufism during the tenth century. See Michael Cooperson, “Ibn Hanbal and Bishr al-Hāfi: A Case Study in Biographical Traditions,” *Studia Islamica* 86 (1997): 71–101.

*The terms *liwāt* (sodomy) and *sihāq* (tribadism) are often translated as “homosexuality” and “lesbianism,” respectively. Many have argued that this translation elides a difference between homosexual acts (the focus of the medieval Islamic discourse) and homosexual identities. I have chosen to render the terms according to their strict definitions, while recognizing that some medieval authorities regarded the practices as encompassing more than just acts. As al-Nuwayrī’s chapter shows, one early scholar argued that the desire of a man by another man constituted *liwāt*. On this subject, see Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

*The term *muhsan* designates a category of personal status in Islamic law. It is an attribute that applies to any adult who is: (1) Muslim; (2) currently or previously married; and (3) free. The punishment for extramarital sex in Islamic law depends on the status of the offender. The *muhsan* offender is to be lethally stoned while the non-*muhsan* offender (e.g., a Muslim man or woman who has never been married) is to be flogged.

*Mālik ibn Anas, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī, and Abū Hanīfa were the eponymous founders of the four main Sunni schools of Islamic law. (See the Register of Proper Names.)

*The sideburns of the male beloved were often compared to scorpions. The “fire and water” of the cheeks refers to their ruddiness and their tears, respectively.

*Presumably a member of the Banū Munajjim, a distinguished family of litterateurs and scholars active in the Abbasid court of the ninth century.

*Fālagh ibn Ābar corresponds to Peleg, son of Eber, as given in the “Table of Nations” in Genesis 10:21–25. The interests of the Arab genealogists in these matters may appear, from a modern perspective, as nothing more than pedantic hair-splitting. However, the core issue here is not the name of a tribal confederation, but rather the lineages that people gave themselves and their families. Al-Nuwayrī (via his source al-Jawwānī) here argues that one cannot claim descent from such-and-such an ancestor if one is actually descended from a parallel branch twenty generations removed from a common ancestor.

*Al-Nuwayrī's categorization of the Banū Hāshim as a family (*raht*) indicates that the limit of ten people who composed a *raht* applied only to the married men, not their wives and unmarried children. Of course, these genealogical categories shifted over time and were quite unstable.

*At this point in the text, al-Nuwayrī devotes seventy pages to laying out and explaining Muhammad’s entire lineage from Adam, which is summarized with his complete name, as given above.

*See the appendix for the full title of this section, which contains much more than just proverbs and parables.

*Abū l-‘Abbās Muhammad ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrad (d. 900 CE) was an important philologist of Baghdad in the ninth century, and a key figure in the early history of *adab*. The term *mathal* is difficult to translate as it has many acceptations, including but not limited to proverbs, parables, adages, maxims, saws, apothegms, aphorisms, figures of speech, and fables.

*Another equivalent might be “desperate times call for desperate measures.”

*This is a reference to the assassination of the third caliph, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, who was a kinsman of Mu‘āwiya, the governor of Syria and the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. By inciting the Syrians with the image of ‘Uthmān’s bloody shirt, Mu‘āwiya hoped to consolidate his own position against ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, the fourth caliph and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad.

*The term *kināya* encompasses many meanings, including periphrasis, euphemism, metonymy, allusion, and various other rhetorical forms. The predominant usage, however, is euphemism. See Erez Naaman, “Women Who Cough and Men Who Hunt: Taboo and Euphemism (*kināya*) in the Medieval Islamic World,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 133, no. 3 (July–September 2013): 467–93.

*As is the case for many cultures, the pre-Islamic Arabs regarded the pronunciation of a person's name to be taboo, and would consequently refer to them using a patronymic (*kunya*). In the medieval Islamic world, the use of the *kunya* in personal address was a matter of respect and cordiality, as it continues to be in the modern Middle East.

*The verse in question is generally held to be a metaphor for sexual reproduction. Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 838 CE) was a scholar of the Quran and the author of several influential works of exegesis and Quranic philology.

*The answer to this amusing riddle depends upon a loose interpretation of the concept of uncle. The following example illustrates its logic: 'Abd Allāh has a daughter named Āliya, and Ja'far has a daughter named Jamīla. 'Abd Allāh marries Jamīla and they have a son named 'Alī, while Ja'far marries Āliya and they have a son named Jamīl. Since 'Alī is the half brother of Āliya (as they share the same father, 'Abd Allāh), this means that he is the uncle of Āliya's son, Jamīl. And because Jamīl is the half brother of Jamīla (as they share the same father, Ja'far), then he is the uncle of Jamīla's son, 'Alī. In this way they are each other's uncles and nephews.

*Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Awf (d. 652 CE) was an early convert to Islam who accompanied Muhammad in the emigrations to Abyssinia and Medina. He fought at the battle of Badr and played an important role in the caliphal succession following the death of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb.

*This refers to chapter 109 of the Quran, which states: “Say: O disbelievers! I worship *not* that which you worship; *nor* do you worship that which I worship. And I shall *not* worship that which you worship, *nor* shall you worship that which I worship. Unto you your religion and unto me my religion.” (Q 109:1–6, emphasis mine)

*This selection represents a very brief excerpt of a much longer discussion of music and its permissibility.

*The imamate is the office of supreme leadership of the Muslim community. Following the death of Muhammad, the imamate was held by the four “Rightly Guided” caliphs: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, and ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib. With the ascension of Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān to the caliphate in 661 CE, the Muslim community became divided over the identity of the legitimate imam. The classical Sunni doctrine—elaborated in one of its most well-known forms by al-Nuwayrī’s source, the judge al-Māwardī (d. 1058 CE)—regarded the caliphs of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties as the true imams of the Muslim community, while other sects recognized the legitimacy of other figures.

*On al-H‘Alimī’s views of the imamate, see Ridwān al-Sayyid, *al-Umma wa-l-jamāa wa-l-sulta* (Beirut: Dār Iqra’, 1984), 136–43; Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13–14. See also the Register of Proper Names.

*The term *huqūq Allāh* (“legal rights and claims of God”) refers to the requirements of the religious law, which are to be fulfilled by an Islamic state. The term *huqūq al-muslimīn* (or, in other formulations, *huqūq al-ādamiyyīn*) relates to the rights and claims of private legal persons. See Baber Johansen, *Contingency in a Sacred Law: Legal and Ethical Norms in the Muslim Fiqh* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 210–18.

*I have used the word “tribe” to make clear that names like Quraysh and Kināna refer to genealogical groupings, but as we saw in al-Nuwayrī’s discussion of genealogy, there is a very sophisticated system of nomenclature to designate the different sizes of such genealogical groupings (see p. 71). According to that system, Quraysh is one of the many subtribes within Kināna, which is itself not even large enough to be a tribe (*qabila*), according to the account elaborated there.

*According to the genealogists, the descendants of Isaac (Banū Ishāq) were the Persians; hence the insistence upon selecting an imam descended from one of Abraham's Arab ancestors.

*In other words, by electing not to punish someone, a ruler will place that person in his debt.

*The word *naṣīḥa* encompasses the two meanings of “sincere conduct” and “faithful counsel,” and is used in both senses in what follows.

*The son of the second Rightly Guided caliph; see Register of Proper Names.

*The Arabic word *hilm* embraces several qualities including forbearance, clemency, moderation, deliberateness, and patience. See Lane, 2:632.

*Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī (d. after 1010 CE) was a philologist and author of works on rhetoric, literary criticism, proverbs, and Quranic exegesis.

*Abd al-Malik ibn Sālih (d. ca. 812 CE) was variously a governor of Medina, Syria, and Upper Mesopotamia under the Abbasids.

*The term *kitāba* means both “writing” and “secretaryship” and is translated accordingly, depending on the context.

*Arabic script contains several sets of letters that are distinguishable from one another only with the use of dots. For example, the letters *bā'*, *tā'*, and *thā'* are identical, except for the presence of a single dot below the line for the *bā'*, and two or three dots above the line for the *bā'* and *thā'*, respectively. To be able to read an unpointed manuscript, despite the ambiguities engendered by this practice, was considered a sign of linguistic proficiency.

*Abd Allāh ibn Tāhir was the Abbasid governor of Khorasan, noted for his learning and culture (see Register of Proper Names). In this anecdote, the nigella seeds he refers to disparagingly in his scribe's handwriting are the black dots differentiating Arabic letters, which any learned reader should have been able to do without.

*Muhammad ibn Abb'ād al-Mutamid (d. 1095 CE) was the last ruler of the Taifa kingdom of Seville and a poet, statesman, and man of letters whose romantic attachments have been memorialized in *adab* literature. Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī (d. 1094 CE) was one of the greatest geographers of the Muslim West, as well as a botanist, poet, and philologist. He frequented the courts of Seville, Cordova, and other Andalusian cities. The *basmala* is the name given to the phrase "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful" (*bi-smi llāhi l-rahmāni l-rahīm*), which begins every chapter of the Quran (except the ninth). It is by far the most common invocation of the divine in Islamic texts as well as in daily life.

*The works mentioned are anthologies of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry considered by later scholars and poets to be exemplary. The *Mufaddaliyyāt* is perhaps the earliest Arabic literary anthology, named after the philologist al-Mufaddal al-Dabbī (d. 780 CE). The great collector and transmitter of pre-Islamic poetry al-Asmaī (d. ca. 831 CE) similarly produced an eponymous anthology, the *Asmaiyyāt*. The *Hamāsa* was compiled by the Abbasid poet Abū Tammām (d. 846 CE) and would remain one of the most popular anthologies throughout Arabic literary history. The *Dīwān al-Hudhaliyyīn* is the tribal anthology of the Banū Hudhayl, an Arab tribe from the vicinity of Mecca.

*The figures mentioned are the most famous representatives of the movement of “modern” poets (*al-muḥdathūn*), which began to emerge around the middle of the eighth century CE. The language, style, and themes of the Moderns marked a significant departure from the older Arabic poetry, attracting controversy and resistance from many critics as well as praise and imitation. The poetry of the Moderns is very significantly represented in al-Nuwayrī’s encyclopedia.

*This is a reference to a tradition in which the Prophet Muhammad said: “He who boasts of more than he possesses is like the wearer of two garments of falsehood.” See G. H. A. Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Hadith* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 190.

*Abū l-‘Atāhiya (d. 825 or 826) was a Kufan poet known for a style of pious and ascetic poetry (*zuhdiyyāt*), which, due to his prolific output and jealous territoriality, became forever associated with his name. For Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī, see the Register of Proper Names.

*Al-Nuwayrī here seeks to demonstrate the importance of accounting (*hisāb*) as the basis for financial secretaryship by showing that it is even mentioned in the Quran.

*Here al-Nuwayrī locates in the Quranic Joseph—who acted as the superintendent of Egypt’s treasuries—a distinguished forefather to all financial clerks.

*The point of this *ḥadīth* is not to demonstrate that Muhammad was an accountant but rather that he had knowledge of accounting and was able to determine that Ibn al-Lutbiyya was trying to skim money off the top of the alms.

*Gifts sent to the sultan were usually accompanied by letters describing the contents of the gift, so as to ensure that it was not stolen or replaced with something else. On this subject, see Elias Muhanna, "The Sultan's New Clothes: Ottoman-Mamluk Gift Exchange in the Fifteenth Century," *Muqarnas* 27 (2010): 189–207.

*On the practice of “drinking sugar,” see Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes*, 472. On *aqsimā* (a beverage made of sugar and raisins) and *fuqqā* (a kind of nonalcoholic or quasi-alcoholic beverage made from wheat loaves soaked in water, sugar, pomegranate juice, and spices, but often erroneously translated as “beer”) see Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes*, 465–82.

*The term used here is “wooden palaces” (*qusūr al-khashab*), which may refer to a kind of portable structure that was erected within the outer tent (*dihlīz*) of the sultan during his travels. For a similar practice among the Mughals, see Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 195.

*The original manuscript uses the phrases “so-and-so” (*fulān*) and “such-and-such” (*al-fulān*) to indicate the sections that should be modified by the scribe in the text above. I have replaced these expressions with blank spaces and the names John Doe and Jane Doe to approximate the appearance of a legal contract.

*The word given is *akhras* (mute), but the contract suggests that the individual would also be deaf.

*These letters represent the basic forms of the Arabic alphabet. Other letters are drawn by using one of these forms and adding one or more dots above or below it. For a discussion of this passage in al-Nuwayrī's text, see Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 94–97.

*See Adam Gacek, “Al-Nuwayrī’s Classification of Arabic Scripts,” *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 2 (1987): 126–30.

*I am indebted to David Larsen's masterful translation of Ibn Khālawayh's *Asmā' al-asad* for the epithets of the lion that al-Nuwayrī transmits. See Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Khālawayh, *Names of the Lion*, trans. David Larsen (Seattle: Atticus/Finch, 2009).

*The animal discussed is the mythological mantichore (*martichoras*), and Aristotle's source is Ctesias. See Aristotle, *The History of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), vol. 1, 97–99.

*Baysān al-Ghawr was a town in the Jordan Valley, eighteen miles south of Lake Tiberias. Qarāwā may be the medieval predecessor of today's Qarāwat Banī Zayd, a Palestinian town near Ramallah.

*A *zibriqān* is a mysterious animal whose name means “moon.” I have not found any references to this animal in other sources except Dozy, who finds it only in al-Nuwayrī’s text (see Dozy, vol. 1, 579).

*For a history of this theme, see Conway Zirkle, "Animals Impregnated by the Wind," *Isis* 25, no. 1 (May 1936): 95–130.

*According to F. Viré, al-Jāhiz, “no doubt through an error of the Arab translator of Aristotle . . . substituted . . . the cheetah for the panther in the name leopard’s bane, panther strangler (*Doronicum pardalianches*), and made it into *khānik al-fuhūd*, ‘cheetah strangler,’ instead of *khānik al-namir*, ‘panther strangler,’ which is the meaning of παρδαλιαγχεΐς, for the Greeks did not know the cheetah.” See *EI2*, s.v. “Namir and Nimr.”

*Cheetahs were prized hunting animals in the medieval Islamic world, famously used by caliphs and other nobles to hunt gazelles, hares, and other swift prey. They were among the “lawful instruments” of hunting along with certain carnivorous raptors and dogs. See *EI2*, s.v. “Fahd.”

*Qūs was the city in Upper Egypt where al-Nuwayrī was raised, so his testimony was likely based on personal witness of cheetahs in its vicinity.

*This famous poem continues on for about sixty-five lines. See Ibn Khallikān, *Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary*, trans. Baron Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842), vol. 1, 399–401.

*The Arabic word *khinzīr* refers to both domesticated pigs and wild boars, but al-Nuwayrī's discussion indicates that he has the boar in mind.

*Abū l-‘Alā’ ‘Atā’ ibn Ya‘qūb Ghaznawī (d. 1098 CE) was a secretary under the Ghaznavid Dynasty, which ruled over much of Iran and Transoxania from the late tenth through twelfth centuries. He was a skilled poet in Persian and Arabic and a master of the epistolary form.

*The values of weights and measures described in historical sources can be difficult to ascertain. During the Mamluk period, an Egyptian *mann* was equivalent to about 840 grams, or just short of two pounds, depending upon the region and the commodity being weighed. See *EI2*, s.v. “Makāyil.”

*The following verses are taken from Imru' al-Qays's great ode, one of the most celebrated poems in Arabic literary history. Note that the order of the lines given by al-Nuwayrī differs significantly from the canonical version of the poem. Translations may be found in A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 61–66, and in Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 249–57.

*Abd al-Samad ibn al-Muadhdhal (d. 854–55 CE) was one of the great poets of Basra, known for his satirical verses, stinging epigrams, and a taste for scandal and spiteful gossip.

*Muhammad ibn al-Qāsim Abū l-ʿAynā (d. ca. 896 CE) was a poet of Basra and Baghdad.

*The word for “cattle” here is *an’ām*, which includes camels in addition to other kinds of livestock.

*A species of shrub native to the Arabian peninsula, favored by camels because of its high salt content, and used as firewood by the Bedouins: “A certain shrub, resembling a dwarf-tamarisk.” (Lane, 3:1152)

*Abd al-J'Abbār Abū Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Azdī (d. 1132–33), known as Ibn Hamdis, was a poet of Muslim Sicily.

*On the cheese made with Khays cow milk, see Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes*, 236. Khays is a rural district in western Egypt.

*Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Dāniyāl (d. 1310 CE) was an oculist from Mosul who spent most of his life in Egypt and was the author of some of the earliest shadow plays in the Arabic language. While Ibn Dāniyāl was a contemporary of al-Nuwayrī's, it is not clear that the latter did in fact hear this verse from the poet as he states. Al-Nuwayrī's principal source for book 3 was Jamāl al-Dīn al-Watwāt's compendium, *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-'ibar*, in which the same phrase appears ("Ibn Dāniyāl recited the following poem to me himself"). It may be that both al-Watwāt and al-Nuwayrī knew Ibn Dāniyāl and heard the poem from him, or that al-Nuwayrī simply copied al-Watwāt's text as he found it.

*The word *jāmūs* is derived from the Persian *gāv-i mīsh*, which means “bull-sheep.”

*The snake known as *al-aswad* (the black) is described by Lane as “the worst and greatest and most noxious of serpents, than which there is none more daring, for sometimes it opposes itself to a company of travelers, and follows the voice, and it is that which seeks retaliation, and he who is bitten by it will not escape death.” (Lane, 4:1463)

*The term *zulm* is commonly used to mean “oppressiveness, tyranny, injustice,” but underlying this sense is a primary signification: “the putting a thing in a place not its own . . . the transgressing the proper limit much or little.” See Lane, 5:1920.

*On the Fārūq theriac, see Gilbert Watson, *Theriac and Mithridatium: A Study in Therapeutics* (London: Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1966); Adrienne Mayor, *The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithradates, Rome's Deadliest Enemy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 244–45.

*On viper pastilles in ancient Greek and medieval Arabic toxicology, see Oliver Kahl, “Two Antidotes from the ‘Empiricals of Ibn at-Tilmīd,’” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 55, no. 2 (2010): 479–96. ‘Alam al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn Abī Hulayqa was one of three brothers jointly appointed by Sultan Qalāwūn to the post of chief physician in his hospital. On the Ibn Abī Hulayqa triumvirate, see Linda Northrup, “Al-Bīmāristān al-Mansūrī Explorations: The Interface Between Medicine, Politics, and Culture in Early Mamluk Egypt,” *ASK Working Papers* 12 (September 2013).

*Abū Hayya al-N'Umayrī (fl. 750 CE) was an Arab poet of Basra known for his boastfulness (despite being almost proverbially cowardly).

*Al-Nuwayrī is presumably referring to the ability of certain species of kite—like kestrels, kingfishers, and some hawks—to hover in midair while they scan the ground for their prey.

*During the Mamluk period, a *ratl* was equivalent to four or five pounds in Syria, depending on the province. In Egypt the *ratl* weighed slightly less than a single pound. Al-Nuwayrī appears to be using the Egyptian measure here.

*Abū Tālib ‘Abd al-Salām ibn al-Hasan al-Ma’mūnī (d. 993 CE) was a poet from Baghdad and a member of several literary courts in Persia, including that of al-Sāhib ibn Abb’ād at Rayy.

*Abū l-Fath Mahmūd ibn al-Husayn Kushājim (d. ca. 961 CE) was a poet, scribe, and astrologer connected with the courts of the Hamdanids in Mosul and Aleppo. He was known in particular for his nature poetry and for his wide learning.

*The term *lihyat al-tays* can also refer to the plant salsify (i.e., goatsbeard, *Tragopogon porrifolius*), but in this case, Ibn Wahshiyya uses the word “hair”; it seems he is referring to an actual goat’s beard.

*The edition of al-Nuwayrī's text here reads "a change in lands" (*taghayyur al-bilād*), which is an error. The original phrase in Avicenna's compendium is "a change in waters" (*taghayyur al-miyāh*). See Avicenna, *The Canon of Medicine, Volume 2: Natural Pharmaceuticals*, ed. Laleh Bakhtiar (Kazi Publications, 2012), 489.

*The last hemistich of this poem reads “like a purse of *dabīqī*, full of pearls,” a reference to a type of fine linen originally produced in Dabīq, a suburb of Damietta in Egypt. Dabīq was famous for its luxurious fabrics, which were prized across the Islamic world. When Dabīq’s fortunes declined, the fabric named after it continued to be manufactured in Egypt and elsewhere.

*Oxymel (*sakanjabīn*) is a mixture of honey and vinegar.

*Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Zāfir al-Azdī (d. 1216 or 1226 CE) was a chancery clerk, a teacher of Mālīkī law, and a poet. He was born in Cairo and lived there and in Damascus, in the employ of the Ayyubid dynasty.

*This poem continues for many lines; see *Nihāya*, vol. 11, 73–74 (DKI edition).

*Āmir ibn Sharāhīl al-Sha‘bī (d. between 721–28 CE) was an important early traditionist and legal scholar of Kufa.

*On Mary and the date palm, see al-Nuwayrī's discussion in book 1, p. 34.

*‘Ajwa dates are a well-known variety of date grown in the vicinity of Medina.

*The penultimate line of this poem contains a reference to the classical Arabic word for “peach” (*khawkh*), which is a palindrome of the letters *khā*, *wāw*, and *khā*. Conventional descriptions of the peach’s fine cloaks and robes are references to its skin, which, like that of the green almond, is velvety and soft.

*All of the fruits in this chapter do in fact have skins, but al-Nuwayrī's criterion seems to be a fruit skin that is inedible. The peel of the citron was typically candied or brined.

*Abū ‘Alī al-Muhassin ibn ‘Alī al-Tanūkhī (d. 994 CE) was a judge and man of letters from Basra who wrote some well-known collections of literary anecdotes and historical reports. A signature of his work was the theme of man’s deliverance from difficult circumstances of all kinds, as encapsulated in the title of his most famous collection, *al-Faraj ba’d al-shidda* (*Relief After Distress*). The work mentioned by al-Nuwayrī, *Nishwār al-muhādara*, has been partially translated into English; see al-Tanūkhī, *The Table-Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge*, trans. by D. S. Margoliouth (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1922).

*A *mithqāl* is a weight measure equivalent to about 0.15 ounces.

*Ibn al-Bayṭār was a famous pharmacologist of the thirteenth century CE; see Register of Proper Names.

*The Arabic name of this resin is *ʿilk al-anbāt* (Nabatean gum).

*The terebinth tree (*Pistacia terebinthus*) was an early source of turpentine.

*Abū Hanīfa al-Dīnawārī was a polymath of the ninth century CE; see Register of Proper Names.

*This is the resin known as dragon's blood, which is obtained from *Dracaena cinnabari*, a tree native to the island of Socotra, as well as some other plant species. Socotra, which lies about 150 miles east of the Horn of Africa, was known in some Greco-Roman sources as Dioscoridis Insula, connecting it with the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Zeus and Leda). This may explain why dragon's blood resin, which Socotra was famous for, is referred to as blood of the two brothers, although other explanations exist. See Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 60–61.

*For al-Tamīmī, see the Register of Proper Names.

*On al-Tamīmī, see the Register of Proper Names. The Arabic title of the work quoted is *Jayb al-‘arūs wa-ayhān al-nufūs*.

*Ahmad ibn Abī Ya‘qūb (fl. second half of the ninth century CE), also known as al-Ya‘qūbī, was a historian and geographer from Baghdad. According to Ahmad Zakī Pāsha, the principal editor of al-Nuwayrī’s encyclopedia (see introduction to volume 12 of the Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyya edition), al-Ya‘qūbī was the principal source for al-Tamīmī’s *Jayb al-‘arūs*, which is itself the source for al-Nuwayrī’s discussion of sexual medicines.

*The Arabic term ‘ūd designates a variety of fragrant and resinous heartwoods used for incense, perfumes, and medicine. The heartwood forms in certain species of the *Aquilaria* genus and is known as agarwood.

*An Egyptian *mann* was equivalent to about 800 grams, or 1.7 lbs.

*Abū l-Qāsim Khalaf ibn al-‘Abbās al-Zahrāwī (d. after 1009 CE) was an important physician of Andalusia and a pioneer of medical surgery. He was known in the Latin West as Abulcasis and was the author of a famous manual, *al-Tasrīf li-man ‘ajaza ‘an al-ta’līf* (*The Arrangement [of Medical Knowledge] for One Incapable of Compiling [A Manual for Himself]*).

*In a culinary context, the term *shawābīr* referred to food cut into the shape of triangles (e.g., candy, dough, meat, or cheese). See Nawal Nasrallah, *Annals of the Caliphs' Kitchens: Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's Tenth-Century Baghdadi Cookbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 426. As the classical dictionaries do not contain this word, it is my supposition that it refers to the same shape in this medicinal context as well.

*A stew made from boiled meat, chickpeas, onions, coriander, and vinegar.

*The Egyptian skink was considered an aphrodisiac and was generally consumed after drying and salting it.

*Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d. 925 or 935 CE) was a major philosopher and physician from the Persian city of Rayy. The author of over two hundred works of medicine, alchemy, philosophy, and other subjects, he was the head of the hospitals of Baghdad and Rayy and a pioneer of experimental medicine. He was known in the Latin West as Rhazes.

*As noted earlier, the values of weights and measures described in historical sources can be difficult to ascertain. The *ratls* of Baghdad and Rayy (the two cities in which al-Rāzī spent much of his life) were roughly equivalent to one pound and two pounds, respectively.

*Also known as *Anthemis pyrethrum*, Spanish chamomile, and Mount Atlas daisy.

*The author of this work (*Kitāb al-Īdāh fī asrār al-nikāh*) was Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Nasr al-Shayzarī (d. 1193 CE), about whom fairly little is known. See L. A. Giffen, “al-Shayzarī,” in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, eds. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 1998), vol. 2, 711.

**Sukk* was a medical preparation comprised mainly of oak gallnuts combined with musk, ambergris, date juice, and other aromatics. See Anya King, “Tibetan Musk and Medieval Arab Perfumery,” in *Islam and Tibet: Interactions Along the Musk Routes*, eds. Anna Akasoy et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 145–61.

*The *Kitāb al-Khawāss* is attributed to Jābir ibn Hayyān (fl. eighth century CE), an important early natural philosopher, physician, and pioneer of Islamic alchemy and chemistry. His enormous corpus of writings includes many works that must have been compiled by others long after his death.

*Ahmad ibn ‘Alī al-Būnī (d. 1225 CE) was a North African Sufi and scholar of the occult sciences. He was the author of several important works on talismans, amulets, and Islamic graphology.

*The term '*ajam*' denotes non-Arabs, foreigners, barbarians, and sometimes Persians, depending on the time period.

*As discussed in the Note on the Translation (p. xxiv), the fifth book, On History, accounts for more than two-thirds of *The Ultimate Ambition*, making it difficult to abridge reasonably within the allotted space. I have, therefore, elected to focus my translation upon the first and last chapters of the fifth book, representing the beginning and end of history, from al-Nuwayrī's perspective. For a full survey of the contents of fifth book, see the appendix.

*The words *abd* and *ama* mean male and female slave or servant, respectively. Each of Eve's first twins was named Servant of God, and each of the second twins was named Servant of the Compassionate.

*Chapter §5.5.12 of al-Nuwayrī's encyclopedia is about the rulers of Egypt from the Abbasid period onward. The portion that deals with the Mamluks occupies just one subchapter of it, but it is over three volumes long in the modern edition of the work.

*The battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt in 1260 CE between the Mongols and the Mamluks represented a decisive turning point in the seemingly unstoppable advance of the Mongol armies into the lands of Islam. The Mamluks’ victory helped bolster the legitimacy of their rule and brought Syria under the control of the sultanate.

*Al-Malik al-Muzaffar Sayf al-Dīn Qutuz al-Mu‘izzī was the Mamluk sultan from 1259 CE until his assassination following the victory at ‘Ayn Jālūt in 1260. Al-Nuwayrī refers to him by his regnal name, al-Muzaffar (the Victorious), but I have opted to follow the practice of other historians by using his first name, Qutuz (so as to avoid confusion with many other Muslim rulers named al-Muzaffar).

*The Mamluk commanders wanted to face the Mongol army in Egypt because its soldiers would have been exhausted after crossing the Sinai from Syria. However, al-Muzaffar Qutuz believed that he had a better chance of defeating the Mongols in Syria before their reinforcements had a chance to arrive. By staging the encounter away from Egypt, he also preserved the option of a fallback position. See Reuven Amitai, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 37–38.

*The Bahriyya was a regiment of Mamluk soldiers and officers in Egypt, so named because its barracks were located on an island in the river (*bahr*) Nile. Following the political tumult of the 1250s, the Bahriyya fled to Syria where they served the Ayyūbid princes. They were reconciled with Sultan Qutuz because of the Mongol threat, but his subsequent assassination apparently had its roots in the factional politics that had precipitated the Bahriyya's exile in Syria. See Linda S. Northrup, "The Bahri Mamlūk Sultanate, 1250–1390," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt, vol. 1: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 248–50.

*This was an extra-legal tax levied on any commercial enterprise involving the use of a waterwheel, including “shops, boutiques and tavern-keepers.” See Linda S. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Mansūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), 297ff.

*This would seem to be a tall tale, as the average Mamluk silver coin (dirham) at this time weighed between .07 and .10 of an ounce. A chicken weighing a kilogram would have cost between 333 and 500 dirhams in the story al-Nuwayrī tells.

*These appellations refer to officer ranks in the Mongol army.

*The edict, which al-Nuwayrī produces in its entirety, goes on to castigate the Mamluks for abandoning Islam and acting unjustly toward their people. The Mongol victory, Ghazan argued, was a sign of God's blessing. Vowing to establish security and justice in Syria, Ghazan reassured his subjects that his army had been forbidden from pillaging or otherwise mistreating the Muslims and members of other faiths, and that any offenders would be put to death.

*Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 870 CE) was a Transoxanian scholar and compiler of one of the canonical collections of Prophetic traditions. His work, known as *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, is regarded by many Sunni Muslims as the most authoritative hadith collection. Al-Nuwayrī's description of al-Yūnīnī's method of redacting the *Sahīh* through "all of its channels" refers to the recension of the work's manuscripts.

*Izz al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Miskīn al-Zuhri (d. 1310 CE) was an Egyptian jurist.

*Ganja (also known as *Kanja* or *Janza*) is a town in Azerbaijan.

*This is an accurate observation; the hippopotamus's stomach has three chambers.

*The phrase in quotes is taken from a Quranic verse (Q 10:27): “And those who earn ill-deeds, (for them) requital of each ill-deed by the like thereof; and ignominy overtaketh them—they have no protector from God—as if their faces had been covered with a cloak of darkest night. Such are rightful owners of the Fire; they will abide therein.”

*Al-Nuwayrī calls him Būlāy.

*The Tower of Flies was a guard tower in the harbor of Acre, built during ancient times and restored by various medieval conquerors. Its ruins remain in the harbor today. The receding and returning sea that al-Nuwayrī describes was the result of the tsunami caused by the earthquake (which is well documented by sources around the Mediterranean).

*For a detailed discussion of this fatwa, see Caterina Bori, “Theology, Politics, Society: The Missing Link. Studying Religion in the Mamluk Period,” in Stephan Conermann, ed., *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus: Mamluk Studies, State of the Art* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Press, 2013), 57–94.

*Al-Nuwayrī says, erroneously, that the envoys were sent by one Pope Francis. In fact, the pontiff at this time was Pope John XXII (r. 1316–34).

*As mentioned above, this hall was the one reserved for the instruction of the Shāfiʿī school, which was al-Nuwayrī's own rite.

*This line item is listed in the deed as one thousand dirhams per month for each professor, his staff of clerks and teaching assistants (*muʿīd*, *dāʿī*, *naqīb*), and his students. As discussed above, the Nāsiriyya had at least four main professors, one for each school of law. The professor earned two hundred dirhams per month, and the clerks and students divided the remaining 800 dirhams.

*Note that this chapter and the following one are the only places in this table of contents where al-Nuwayrī provides a level of detail beyond the chapter level. While such smaller divisions are found throughout the encyclopedia—sometimes even penetrating to the fifth-order level—al-Nuwayrī does not record them in his table of contents.

*There is a lacuna in the manuscript here, which means that we do not know exactly when al-Nuwayrī completed his work.

*The cattle driver was in charge of the ox that ran the waterwheel, which brought water to the madrasas's courtyard, fountain, garden, et cetera.

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